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SHOUTING FOR JUSTICE

The Journey of a Jewish Journalist Across the Century of Hitler and Israel

by Herb Brin¹ September 2002

Preface: In Commentary . . .

As a near century of life begins to close for me, it's inevitable that I'd be asked to write what I can in memory of the events through which I lived.

Nothing special, perhaps -- for I am but one among billions who emerged with memories of the fearful Twentieth Century, amazed that we survived.

Ah, but that "we" leaves out so many. And so many things are still unsaid, so many stories untold.

Here you'll find some that were witnessed by a roving reporter, hard-eyed and penetrating, and others noticed by a poet. In totality, my experiences emerge against a background of unspeakable inhumanities, indignities, Zyklon B and the Hitlerian mania that is still so staggering.

Mine was indeed a depraved century. It might have been the most beautiful.

The arts, the sciences, the probings of space, walking on the moon — automobiles, jets, computers and networks of silicon intelligence never contemplated in previous centuries. The rising up of the oppressed. These were mine and thine.

Nevertheless...

Have you counted the children, the children, the children who died with satanic gas in their lungs and with eyes incapable of tears? Count the good people who should be with us, right now.

Can good outweigh evil? It can! I must believe it. If we learn from the past.

Only if we learn.

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Chapter One: Days of Poverty and Hope

For warmth in winter, outside the Crane plumbing supplies company on Kedzie Avenue in Chicago, my father and I would start two huge fires in 55-gallon steel drums.

We'd feed the fires with yesterday's news — than which, it was said, there was nothing deader. The news seemed to cover world events which one day would put to shame that old newspaper cliché.

The Hitler years were beginning to unfold in Europe. A world would soon be propelled into the most enormous, the most shattering events in human history. We were burning the newspaper pages describing events that were beginning to rage. Events without parallel for mankind. The worst century.

As a young man, I was hoping to become part of the profession of journalists. This, I must do!

My father, Sol Brin, already was a regular contributor of articles to the Polish press in America. He put it directly on the line: These were the most dangerous of times in history and there seemed no way out of it. Certainly not by way of a dictatorial Soviet Union led by a murderous Josef Stalin.

With the fires roaring higher in the steel drums, my mother, Pia, would come along with a sack of woodscraps, a wizened woman of 40, her head protected from the subzero winds by a babushka. She brought along a few sandwiches, some soft drinks. Coffee for my father.

Back in Belarus, where she was born in a shtetl called Pietrikov, Pia and her four sisters would go into the woods to collect wood scraps for their father, Reuven Goroway, who earned a bare living in the village along the Dnieper River by going into forests seeking broken limbs of trees. These he chopped up and, by horse and wagon, transported them to town.

Not an easy living for a family of eight — five sisters, a brother named Aaron and my grandmother, whose name I'll never know.

One Easter Sunday, to avenge Christendom's feelings against so-called Christ-killer Jews, one of the sisters was torn limb from limb in childbirth. Long before Hitler. Before Hitler, indeed.

Pia, a beautiful dark-haired child, was a total illiterate. She was my grandmother's helper. Pia and her 12 year old sister, Rose, came first to America, by steerage, of course. Children fleeing a czar's wrath. Pia and Rose were the first of my family to see the awesome Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor.

Castle Garden was their point of entry to the New World.

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My father's father -- my grandfather-- was Julian (Israel) Dobrzhinsky, chess aficionado. His spirit revolved around the game. I understand that he was one of the greatest players in Poland. Poland had about three and a half million Jews, and maybe three million of them played chess.

The Dobrzhinskys were a Polish branch of a family quite prominent in Germany. My father's cousin, Maximilian Hardin, was a press attaché for Bismarck and a brilliant journalist. In fact, they had a statue to honor him, but I understand that it was destroyed during the time of Hitler.

My father was born in 1883, and brought up in Poland, in a town called Konin, northwest of Lodz. This is the same town the Goldwaters came from. Barry Goldwater's father was Moses Goldwater. I suspect my grandfather and Moses Goldwater were friends, in such a small town of 2000 people. Barry Goldwater, of course, ran for President of the United States as a Republican. But he didn't run as a Jew. Typically for the time, Solomon Brin, was forced to join the Russian army, because Poland was occupied by the Russians.

During the Russian-Japanese war of 1905-1906, the Tsarists insisted that Sol join the war against Japan, so my father went to battle as a baker in the Russian Army. I think Sol got as far as Mukden when the war ended in one of the greatest and most horrible of all land battles -- humiliatingly for the Tsarists -- and he was sent back home.

Under the old regime, Jews were forbidden to live in Moscow, or even to visit, except under certain restricted situations. But since Sol had served in the army, he was allowed to go to Moscow. On arrival, he joined the Moscow Art Theater, where he worked several seasons as a supernumerary in the opera. Which meant that he carried spears in *Aida* and *La Bohème*, and in shows of that sort. He couldn't sing for beans. They used him as people to fill out the cast, and I guess Sol Brin was a people for the Russian Opera. So you see we don't come from a very artistically creative family. We are merely spearcarriers for the Russian opera. At least my father was.

Sol returned to his hometown of Konin, in Poland. His mother had died. (Her name was Chaya, for whom I was named Chaim.) Soon, my father's father, Julian, the chess player, had taken for himself a bride, and my father discovered that he couldn't go home again.

He decided to visit relatives in Germany, and they made it possible for him to travel to America on steerage. My father hoped to make it to the Alaskan gold fields that were entrancing young men to the Yukon — the fields that then had enthralled Charlie Chaplin. He was supposed to go to Ellis Island, around 1910, but he was told aboard ship that he'd have to come to Galveston, Texas. The immigration authorities were trying to disperse new arrivals in America. They didn't want too many Jews coming to New York.

My father's ship arrived in the new land on the Fourth of July. At least that's what he told me,

though maybe he put me on a little bit. Anyway, there was a big fireworks show going on, and my father understood why... that he had arrived, and all of America was celebrating! Nobody could ever tell Sol Brin that the celebration was really for the Fourth of July. With a wry smile he insisted it was for his arrival in the new world.

When my father came to America, he did as many immigrants, and dropped "Dobrzhinsky," taking in its place the name of a cousin of his, Solomon Brin, who was supposedly the "tobacco king" of Russia. He might just as easily have taken the name Abravanel, which I think I would have done. Isaac Abravanel was leader of the Jewish community in Spain, and represented the Jews in the court of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand. His family fortune was turned over to Christopher Columbus to finance his first voyage. When the Abravanel family left Spain in 1492, during the expulsion, one branch settled in Holland. When problems arose in Holland, they went on to Metz, the Alsace-Lorraine region of France, and onward to parts of Germany. How do I know these things? My father told me stories. He said there exists a historical book of family records that was retained by the family in Konin, kept by Henry Glicenstein, the sculptor.

In a recent years, while researching my book, Ich bin ein Jude (I am a Jew), during a trip to Poland, I tried to locate this family record. Unfortunately, much of Konin had been destroyed in the war. The Jewish cemetery was demolished. All I found was a mass Jewish grave that contained five or six thousand people buried, nameless, alone.²

Sol found his first job as a section hand on the Union Pacific Railroad and made it all the way to Chicago when he chanced to meet Pia, a picture beauty at 18. Enchantments of the Yukon faded swiftly for Sol Brin.

Sol and Pia were married. Brother Robert arrived promptly — and in due course, some 13 months and nine days later, Herb Brin was born in the kitchen bedroom of a cold water flat on Lincoln Street in Chicago. My parents called me Hymie. The birth certificate said I was Henry Brin. (I was later told that a few blocks away lived a young man by the name of Hymie Rickover. He later

² My father's brother, Max Dobrzhinsky, was a rabbi educator, in Metz, France. He moved from Konin, Poland to Metz during the 1920's. I remember when letters would come to our small apartment in Chicago on Claremont Avenue. My father would read letters in German, written to him by his brother Max. My father would tell me what the letters contained. He also used to read aloud letters from his father, Julian Dobrzhinsky, which described other members of the family. I understand that my father had two other brothers, one a doctor, and one a lawyer. I located a doctor, Max Dobrzhinsky in Tel Aviv, Israel, and I found a George Dobrzhinsky, in Paris, who was a poet and editor of a literary magazine. Again, we could find no connection between the families. The doctor Dobrzhinsky, in Tel Aviv was irritated and testily refused to meet with me, some twenty years ago. (*Advice welcome whether to incorporate or omit material in footnotes*)

developed nuclear submarines for the United States Navy, one of the great admirals of a new kind of defense force, never before seen.)

At the time of my birth, my mother was 19 years old, and my father 34.

My father, a graduate of the gymnasium in Konin, Poland, stemmed from an important Jewish family. His cousin, Maximillian Hardin, was an eminent writer and served as press secretary to Bismark, the celebrated German chancellor. His mother's brother would become governor of the great state of Idaho.

Sol Brin was early on fascinated by the writings of the Russian poet Pushkin. He would read Pushkin poems to me as a child in his arms.

"Come," he often said to me, "we have a secret..."

Russian poetry. I absorbed the Pushkin cadences. My father's secret.

For a living in Chicago, my father worked for the People's Gas Co. as a "gas engineer" — selling water heaters to the natives: the Poles, the Germans, the Swedes — an occasional Jewish family.

While my mother's family was of the Jewish peasant stock of Russia, my father stemmed from prominent Jewish families of Europe. And this carried through in the New World, too. Gov. Moses Alexander of Idaho was my father's uncle on his mother's side. I actually met that great man, when I was a very small boy..

As World War I ended, Gov. Alexander wrote to my father to meet and visit with him at the Dearborn Street Railroad Station, as he passed through Chicago on a trip to Washington with other notables.

Pa took me along with him and we took our first taxi ride to the Dearborn station. He explained how important a governor was and that I must act with great respect. It was a brief encounter, but Moses Alexander, resplendent in his brown woollen suit and happy smile, was now as important to me as the Moses who climbed a mountain for God.

The governor patted me on the head as he departed, saying: "A bright boy. A bright boy." I must have said something. My father embraced me.

When I was about three years old, my parents decided to move to an English basement apartment on Claremont Avenue. This was an improvement, since the house on Lincoln Street was a hovel, but a rather shabby improvement. Although I was young, I remember that move with the horse and wagon of my Uncle Shalom, the carpenter. The furniture was piled high. It went clippity

clop on down Claremont Avenue.

We moved into a small apartment building next to the synagogue, a Hungarian synagogue as I recall. Many times when I was playing baseball out on the street, the men would twist my arm to come in to complete a minyan, the ten men required by Jewish tradition for formal prayer. The other kids on the street would run away when the shamash came out looking for someone, but I must admit I felt honored they would take me as a minyaner, even before I was bar mitzvahed. So, I would complain all the time that I preferred baseball, but I went when they called.

The kids on the block were rather tough. Misty Reuben lived next door. Misty's Yiddish name, Misso, means nut, an appropriate name. His father had been killed in an accident. His mother took over a little trucking company, a moving van of some sort which they rented out. She lived on the first floor of the apartment building on 22 North Claremont Avenue, which she owned.

We moved into the apartment where Joey Rake used to live. Joey played piano at Julliard. Next door lived Benny Feinman, who instructed me on how babies were born. We were sitting at the curb one day when it was raining, and we were racing chips of wood down the sewers, our sailing vessels that went down to sea. Benny Feinman said to me, you know how babies are born? Your father heps your mother. I beat the hell out of Benny. I chased him up and down the street, and around the back of the synagogue. My father don't do that to my mother, you sumbitch. So that's what happened to Benny Feinman.

When we moved over to 1244 N. Claremont Avenue, we lived on the third floor of a three story apartment building. On the first floor lived a rabbi, H. N. Rosenblum, and his son, a medical doctor. When I became 13, Rabbi Rosenblum made me a stickholder for weddings that were conducted in his living room. I must have held the stick for more than a hundred weddings. Four men were required to hold the corners of the hupa, the wedding canopy. When he was a stickholder short, Rabbi Rosenblum with his full flowing beard, would point a finger at me, to indicate that I should come.

I wouldn't ever haggle with a rabbi. I was taught by my father to respect rabbis. I would never even call a rabbi by his first name, after he became a rabbi. Although I am extremely close to Rabbi Kramer, I've never once called him Rabbi Bill or William or Mordecai; I always refer to him as Rabbi. It's a matter of the way you must treat people. I know rabbis aren't perfect; when a man enters the rabbinate, alas, the rabbinate doesn't always enter the man. Many rabbis playing on the name shouldn't. But since I am hardly one to judge personalities, I've always accorded all rabbis the dignity of their office. Anyway, Rabbi Rosenblum had a delightful family who would serve meals, not real meals, but crackers, matzoh, and fruit, in order for us to say a prayer. It always felt good to

be invited to attend dinner with Rabbi Rosenblum.

The apartment building was next to a vacant lot, which my father also purchased. When the Depression hit, we lost everything

At the age of four years, I was accepted into kindergarten at the Schley school, a block from our apartment. Many famous people attended the Schley school, including writers such as Ben Heck, who wrote The Child of the Century, who I suppose influenced me to become a journalist more than anybody else. I have great respect for Ben Heck. My father knew his father. I met him when I was just a kindergarten student, and he was a high school graduate who visited the Schley School.

In my class was Saul Bellow, who much later won the Nobel Prize for literature. He had come from Canada. Saul Bellow kept to himself, and I didn't live on his block, but we did meet at the Schley School, where we were both students up to Junior High School. He then went on to Tule High School. I also took some classes at Tule, but most of my classes were at Crane Tech. Crane had more of a sports identity, and I was a sports aficionado. I loved basketball and football. Crane Tech was about three miles away, and I would usually walk there along Ofree Boulevard, if I couldn't hitch a ride. I was the greatest hitchhiker in Illinois, I guess. My thumb was constantly flying. In those days, it was quite safe to hitchhike, though I wouldn't recommend it today.

I remember coming home once from Crane Tech High on the streetcar, and seeing the big newspaper headlines: "Wall Street Collapses." It was 1929, the October Massacre on Wall Street, which resulted in the Great Depression. But I'm getting ahead of the story.

At the Schley school, we had a Miss Hoierman, a German woman who always wore high lace collars. None of her arms or legs could be seen, what with her floor-length dresses. She was stiff and austere, and wore those pince-nez glasses. Nobody haggled with Miss Hoyaman. Her assistant was Mrs. Larson, an Irish lady. (Of course, it seems to me now that Larson must have been Scandinavian). She too, was staunch, and had no entangling alliances. These were the two toughest teachers in my whole experience in school.

When I was six years old, we were visited by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The Temperance Union ladies came up on stage with one of those huge 10 gallon water bottles, which was empty. They had a ten foot long rubber tube, at the end of which was a lighted cigarette. Suddenly the inside of that tank became filled with smoke of the ugliest yellow color you ever saw. Just out of one cigarette. One of the Christian Temperance ladies got up and said "This is a warning to you children not to smoke. One cigarette can do this to your lungs. And if you smoke at all, you'll probably be smoking a pack or two a day. You can imagine how much of this dirty gas would

fill your lungs in just a day's time." Then she passed out punch cards. I was so frightened by that demonstration, and I believed in its truthfulness, that I took a card, pledging never to smoke in my life. And I never did smoke. Others pledged not to smoke until they were eighteen, or twenty-one or older. I think that I was the only one in class to take the pledge for life.

I wish my brother had taken the same pledge. We were close, so close. Robert became a fine optometrist but I could never make him see the dangers of smoking, that robbed him so many years.

I went through classes very easily. Teachers would always say, "Herb, you're one of the smartest kids in class, why are you afraid to do arithmetic?" I was so fearful of doing arithmetic, that I flunked one whole semester in the fourth grade, because I couldn't do the math problems. If you asked me today to do the problems of the fourth grade, I'm sure that I wouldn't be able to do them.

Sol was fired after working for the gas company for 29 years — just before he became eligible for a pension. No longer a "gas engineer." The oncoming Depression became hungry days for the young Brin family. But my father's faith in the national system that spelled democracy never wavered. These things my mother could never quite understand. But her eyes reflected love for her learned husband.

My father's pursuit of the American spirit brought him in conflict with communism that had taken root in Russia, and he wrote numerous articles for Chicago's leading Polish newspapers, especially the *Chicagoski*, warning that dreadful consequences would be inevitable should Poland fall back on anti-Semitism as a way of life.

These things, he insisted, would never happen in Germany. Never mind that a German idiot with a Charlie Chaplin mustache had taken over the country.

I had A's in high school,³ but got turned down by every college I applied to, because I had no

³ (*Incorporate portions of the following?*) I don't want to spend too much time on my early life, but I think it's important to know that I named myself. Then I unnamed half of myself. Hence the name Herb. And yes, I was a lousy mathematician, flunking the fourth grade. I make no claims about it. I deserved to flunk. When my parents saw how badly I did, they threw up their hands and said, they ought to test this guy. So I was tested by the school authorities. They called in my brother, who was a year ahead of me in classes. They said they were going to put me back half the grade I had flunked out of. Robert asked why. Miss Hoyaman said there's something strange about your brother Herb. He scores the highest in the history of the school, except in arithmetic and algebra. She said they couldn't understand that. So they put me back with my former classmates. Robert told me that I had scored the highest in the school, in all subjects but arithmetic. It became a big joke in the family. My father said, "Herbert, you'll never become an accountant." I promised him that I would never become an accountant. God bless us all, I never did become an accountant.

I was the head of the classes in history and music appreciation. I recall an assembly in fifth grade, when a visiting musicologist came with records and played the melodies of the various operas and symphonies. He asked if any students recognized them. I guess my hand went up at every record. The woman asked how I knew so many. I told her that my father often took me to the operas and concerts. We had games where we would sing to each other the various melodies that you're now playing. I know them all. This musicologist recommended that I be promoted a grade ahead of my class. I didn't want that because I didn't want to embarrass my brother, Robert, who was a year ahead of me. So I remained with my class

scholarship money. I was working evenings seven days a week in a grocery store, sleeping in the back, earning seven dollars a week. The job helped my parents, but it couldn't begin to pay tuition.

So I went to the YMCA, which operated a junior college, now Roosevelt University. I applied for admission at De Paul law school, a Catholic school, and was accepted. They said they'd help me get a job so I could pay tuition, and sent me to a head office of Montgomery Ward on the northside of Chicago, to work as a stockclerk. I was ecstatic and worked the entire morning, then the foreman asked me to fill out an application report. I listed Jewish for religion. Before the shift ended, the foreman came back and said that they couldn't hire me, because I was Jewish. I never found a job with wages comparable with those at Montgomery Ward, sufficient to cover tuition at De Paul. So I dropped out of school.

In 1935, I decided to heck with it all in Chicago. I obtained a cheap Chevrolet for around \$200, and started driving west to California. On the way, I stopped at the Fort Worth World's Fair, then drove on to the Painted Desert. It was a delight, seeing the grand scenes of America, the rock formations, the petrified forests, the ever-changing purple beauty of open spaces. I continued on to San Diego, where they also had a world fair in 1935. The area wasn't much to my liking, so I

through the sixth grade, when I was sent over to Sabin Junior High School. After Robert graduated from junior high school, I was again offered the opportunity to graduate half a year ahead of my class.

I was popular with the students. They elected me judge of the municipal school court. I never could understand why they picked me to be a judge. What were my duties? When teachers brought in students charged with being obstreperous in class, I would require them to write a certain sentence a hundred times, such as: "I will be good in class." I remember a young girl I took a fancy to. I helped her by writing half her sentences, and then marked her case dismissed.

At Crane Tech High School, my greatest interest was English literature. Through my teacher, Mr. Feldman, I grew acquainted with the adventures of Jack London, and especially loved Huckleberry Finn. I once wrote a book report and the teacher made me stay after school, and asked where I had copied it from, claiming that no student my age could write such a report. I just about burst into tears. She could have encouraged me, rather she humiliated me. I was so angry that I stayed away from class. I was called into Principal Hagen's office, and he asked why I didn't attend class. I told him the story of the report. To this day, I recall the ending of that book, where the character who had lived through many traumas started swimming to the bottom of the ocean. At that moment, he knew he did not know. (----?) I understand that's how Jack London committed suicide. The book was a prediction of what Jack London intended to do. The principal must have arranged things, because I don't think that missed class was ever counted against me.

As Commissioner of Activities at Crane Tech High School, I organized the annual school play. The first one, I had to follow the instructions of a drama teacher, and it just didn't come off well. So I insisted that I would organize my own school play. I called it the Ugly Bookman, based on the song Vulgar Bookman. (Het it? Yo ho heave ho.) I got together a bunch of Russians and Jews. There were no girls at Crane Tech. It was a boys school, 4000 boys. The Ugly Bookman was a riot. We had twelve guys pulling a canoe across the stage. It became a potpourri of funny scenes, and a great success.

I played golf, and won the Chicago Tribune City championship for high school golfers. They awarded me a set of golf clubs. That same year, I guess I was fifteen and a half, I went out for the Crane Tech football team. I was about 170 pounds, 6 foot 1. I was fast as hell on my feet. But, a problem resulted from the fact that I couldn't see too well. When I was six or seven years old, at a Fourth of July celebration, a chunk of rock flew into my right eye, causing an enlargement of the pupil. To this day, I can't see well enough to coordinate catching a ball. It would have been great to play end, but they made me left tackle. I went out for the team, hoping to get a college football scholarship.

My parents couldn't afford to send either of us to college. My brother had won a college scholarship to the University of Chicago, in a history competition. I graduated from high school quite young, when I was sixteen and a half, unfortunately, without that football scholarship. I went on to Crane Junior College, which was a free school.

I recall that the Chicago Tribune lashed out at the Board of Education during a time of financial crisis, when school teachers were not being paid: "How does the city school system dare to operate a junior college system, when it can't even pay the teachers? This is a fad and a frill." Within six months, Crane Junior College was shut down by the whim of Colonel McCormick, owner of the Chicago Tribune. I resented that so much, that when I was later working as a reporter, I turned down three invitations to join the staff of the Chicago Tribune. I preferred to remain with the City News Bureau.

decided to drive on to Los Angeles.

There I applied at Arden Farms for a job as a milkman. They hired me at the highest salary I'd ever seen, \$25 a week. I sent some home to my parents. I applied at Loyola Law School, and they accepted me gladly, based on my record at De Paul. But I couldn't stay awake in class. The job as a milkman didn't permit much leeway. I'd wake up at 1:00 in the morning to start my delivery runs, near Beverly and Fairfax. I'd finish collections around 3:00 in the afternoon. This was a seven day a week job. I had no time off. There were no unions. I had nobody to help me. So it was only natural that I would fall asleep in class. Loyola kicked me out. Thus ended my law career.

I helped organize the milkdriver's union. Within six months, a strike was called. Before the strike took place, Arden Farms caved in, and allowed the men one day off each week. I wasn't too pleased about working there.

After a year, I had to leave Los Angeles for Chicago, because my father wasn't doing well. He suffered from Menier's disease, which affects the inner ear and equilibrium.

With a small bundle of nickels and dimes, saved from 29 years with the Gas Company, Sol and Pia bought the rights to the six newspaper stands outside the Crane Company. Now I hurried home by bus from California to join the family business.

I was 20 years old. Had gone West to see the country. Perhaps find a job as a reporter. Fat chance. Alas, etcetera, the nation had been taken over by the Depression. The Great Depression. And here I was kicking around my Pushkin cadences in English.

When my father started to improve four or five months later, I took a bus to New York. I wanted to attend a play by William Saroyan, called "The Time of your Life." I had taken a fancy to his writing. Saroyan is a sensitive writer, and I wanted to see his first play on Broadway. I arrived in Times Square by bus in the early morning. I guess I was one of the homeless, so I sat on a bench, until the box office opened. For \$3 I managed to buy a ticket for a matinee performance. I put the ticket in my pocket, and went looking for a room, which I found for \$9 a week, near Columbia.

I was hired for a job with a collection agency, working out of Philadelphia. The United Mercantile Exchange. They made collections for the clothing trade, calling on merchants who hadn't paid their bills. Remember, this was 1937, during the Depression. I took the job on commission. They would pay me so much for every account I brought to them. Businesses with problems collecting bills, who needed a collection agency. I would sell them on the idea of using the United Mercantile Exchange to do the collections for them. I traveled on business to Philadelphia two or three times during my stay in New York. While in Philadelphia, I visited all the art museums. I was

especially taken by the Rodin museum. Rodin did the sculpture of the Thinker, and other well-known pieces. There was a lady in the museum office who took a fancy to me, and I took a fancy to her, but I guess it wasn't to be. I found out that my father had had a lapse, so I decided to return to Chicago, living with my parents.

At that point, Sylvia, Robert's wife, suggested that she knew a beautiful, blonde, blue-eyed girl. An exquisitely beautiful intelligent girl, who played the violin. Sylvia had told her about me, and she wanted us to meet. That happened to be Selma Stone. There was a party at the home of one of Sylvia's relatives in Illinois. I was invited to the party, and I saw this exquisite young woman of about twenty-one. We talked, and she told me that she had graduated from Northwestern University. I told her that I had met one of the lecturers at Northwestern, William Saroyan. She asked how that had happened. I replied that he was a writer to whom I had taken a special liking. I had attended his play, "The Time of Your Life," when I was in New York. Backstage, I had the opportunity to meet him.⁴

The Bund

Meanwhile, I had gotten a job at Sears, Roebuck and Co., at one of their northwest stores, in a Germanic neighborhood. My job was to sell these new record players, which would play eight or ten records in a row. This was the first big step away from the hand gramophone. I did very well; I was selling quite a bit, and making \$35 a week. Selma liked the fact that I was creative, so we agreed to get married. We were married Christmas Day, 1940.

At Sears Roebuck, was another young man who loved music -- Frederick Schrieber. He used to play the violin with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. During his off-moments away from meeting customers on the floor, he would play records. He especially loved Jewish violinists, and his big hero was Jascha Heifitz. There was one problem with this Frederick Schrieber. Not only was he German, but he was a Nazi, and he despised the Jews. I asked him how he could work with me. "Oh, you're special. You're a white Jew."

Frederick didn't know that at that time I was working with the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai Brith, as a spy within the German American Bund in Chicago. Friday evenings, I would go to

⁴ Selma was a very attractive young lady to take to dinners, a movie. She told me she didn't have many friends at work. People her age didn't like her, because she didn't see eye to eye with them politically. What she was telling me was that she was a member of the Communist Party, for a short time at Northwestern. Some who didn't agree with her politics or tangled with her called her 'the battleaxe.' But I was charmed, not repelled. She later became fiercely anti-communist, as did many who found out the truth about Stalin, though she retained a strong sense of compassion for the poor.

the Haus Vaterland. I never told Selma about these trips, I would tell her that I had to work late at the store. I would attend meetings of the Bund. Also on Friday and Saturday nights when the store was open late, I would manage to leave early, so I could attend rallies. I got to meet all the German leaders, listening while they planned their next escapades. They loved marching through Harms Park in Skokie, unfurling Nazi banners. They always wondered how the Jewish gangs knew to be there, ready to confront them. I told them someone in the organization must be tipping them off. Of course that was Yours Truly.

These guys were real tough characters, some of the roughest hatemongers I've ever encountered, equal to the Aryan Nations gang. So, on Sunday afternoons, I would attend parades, marches and talks at Harms Park. It pains me greatly to know that many of these Nazis were beaten up by the young Jewish fighters. (Irony, irony, son!) I didn't hesitate to do that myself once. Your mother was sitting next to me on a bus, when a Nazi spouted off about the Jews. I took him by the collar, and said, one more word and I'm going to knock you to kingdom come. He sat down, but kept spouting off. I slammed my fist into his jaw. The driver stopped in front of a church in Garfield Park. I grabbed this guy and tossed him off the bus, then followed and beat him from one end of the lawn to the other, and finally dashed back to the bus, which was waiting for me. Everyone on the bus applauded. So there were a lot more good Americans, than these Nazi bums. God bless this country.

More about my fight with Chicago Nazis in the next chapter.

Not long after that, I gathered up my courage and went to see Sterling North, the book editor at the Chicago Daily News, asking if he needed an assistant reader and reviewer. I must have talked a good line because he gave me a few books on trial. Later he told me he was impressed by the quality of my writing, and would I please come every week to get books from him?

Doggone if he didn't give me by-lines for my work. Oh, no money. He himself was paid a pittance by the newspaper that spawned an array of literary lions, including Carl Sandberg.

University life was closed to a Herb Brin in those days. I had tried a number of colleges, only to be kicked out when tuition time came along. Them were the days, my friends . . .

With a fistful of Daily News by-lines in hand, I shuffled through a windblown snowstorm to a small office on Dearborn Street occupied by the historic City News Bureau of Chicago "City Press," as the service was known on the police beats.

Tremulous, surrounded by clattering typewriters and mimeo machines and young men

shouting into the old stick telephones that “you bastards better get the facts right,” I soon discovered that covering news in Chicago was a bitch.

A guy I later knew as Cecil Jensen put it blandly to a beat reporter: “Yeah, Yeah, if your mother says she loves you, check it out!”

I was pointed toward a cubicle where the general manager officed. A bespeckled guy named Ira Gershman held power of life or death over one’s dreams of a career in journalism.

I was shaking, as I spoke, of my hopes for a career in poetry, and handed the boss a small resume. That, along with a few book reviews printed by Sterling North. With by-lines.

Gershman looked at me over the rim of his glasses.

“This is a tough job. If you can’t make it past those guys on the phones in the other room, they’ll mark you as being too soft. You’ll be out on your ass faster than a kick could land there. Not that we wouldn’t love you. But our obligation is to the press of Chicago — not to anyone’s feelings.”

Looked through me and said:

“Twenty five bucks a week. Pay your own car fare. Southside police beat tomorrow night. See Larry Mulay . . .”

That’s how I became a reporter in the most wide-open news city in America.

CHAPTER TWO:

If your mother says she loves you — check it out!

Two days after Gershman hired me, Larry Mulay fired me.

According to Chet Opal, I was too god-damned soft for a reporter’s job in Chicago.

Seems the police were told of a poor woman living alone in a tiny upstairs room who had decided in desperation to chuck it all. Couldn’t pay her rent. Nothing to eat. Needing some minor medical attention. Typical depression agonies. Nowhere to turn.

I got her on the telephone and she sobbed bitterly, then pleaded with me not to use the story. “Oh, please!”

I explained to Chet Opal that it was a terribly “cheap” story. The woman was of no consequence. No redeeming qualities to the story — for so it seemed.

“How did she plan to commit suicide?” Opal asked.

“Told me she was gonna steal some pills for an overdose.”

“What kind of pills” How many?”

“Beat’s me.”

“Ask her.”

“You mean a woman in our day and age wants to kill herself and a City Press reporter gotta find out what the pills are?”

“Yeah!” yelled Chet Opal. “and the color of the pills. Get the story, for criminey sake.”

Reporters covering beats in Chicago would be allowed to use the police sergeant’s telephone by leaning over his desk.

The sergeants didn’t mind, providing the reporter used the officer’s name in a police story from time to time.

The “monicker” was a powerful tool of a reporter in Chicago. Editors in the news rooms of the city understood and allowed the monickers to remain intact. That’s the way it went down to the press rooms.

Chet Opal and I went round and round on that one.

On one of my phone calls, the woman broke down bitterly.

I decided to take a street car to her apartment. Brought a hot dog and some coffee for her. Her hands shook as she took the hot dog from me. I guess it was a Flooky’s dog. But never mind. Chet didn’t want to know the brand of hot dog, nor coffee.

I snatched out some of my notes and called for a rewrite guy. Chet Opal had gone home for the day. He had left word with Larry Mulay that I was too soft as a reporter and could never make it in Chicago.

I dictated my story to a new rewrite guy, who then turned me over to Larry Mulay.

Larry said: “Sorry to tell you this but you’ll have to find another job. Opal said you’re too soft and we can’t have this at City Press.”

The phone went silent for a few intense minutes. He was reading my story. “You wrote this story about a poor woman munching a hot dog?”

“Yeah, that was me.”

“It’s not bad. Not bad . . . tell you what, finish out the week to Friday which is payday. Then you’re fired.”

Too soft in a tough town.

#

I learned swiftly what the City News Bureau was.

It was a nationally celebrated news service owned by the Chicago daily newspapers. Very

much like the Associated Press, which serves independently around the world.

In Chicago, news items covered by young reporters would be dispatched to the various newspapers by means of a network of underground pneumatic tubes connecting the City Press main office with editorial offices of each of the daily papers. That gave each paper an even break on a story. Most of the items covered were of little value. The big papers sent their own reporters to cover the sensational headline stuff. But bread and butter local news was another matter. With reporters on hand around the clock on the various beats, City News proved to be a great protection for each of the newspapers. Scoop insurance.

City Press copy was typed out on green wax sheets to enable them to be run off on mimeograph machines. Before the days of e-mail and whatever “dot com” means.

Each item was dispatched to the various papers in pressure tubes that created their own clatter and hiss in the press room.

City Press had an unusual way of checking how the Chicago newspapers used its services. Clippings were cut out of the daily papers and reporters learned whether the dailies ran their own versions of the stories or simply the City Press copy. Two parallel lines drawn inside a news clipping meant that the paper had used a “verbatim” story from City Press.

Turned out that my story about the woman eating my hot dog had made it “verbatim” in all the papers. Two of the papers gave my story different by-lines.

“Damn good piece,” Chet Opal told me the next day.

“But I’m still fired . . .”

Opal reversed his assessment of Herb Brin as a reporter.

We became close friends. In time, Chet Opal moved on to assume his role as U.S. consul in Amman, Jordan.

Anyway, this is how a young reporter made it in Chicago as a “soft” journalist.

And when I joined my parents selling newspapers outside the Crane Co., I felt doggone proud to see my front-page “verbatim” go up in flames with the rest of yesterday’s news.

One of the papers even gave me a personal by-line from time to time. No extra pay, of course. Twenty five bucks a week in those Depression days were high class bucks — for me.

CHAPTER THREE: Chicago Gangland

Neither Ira Gershman nor Larry Mulay could make me out. I was writing the kind of copy that City Press never encouraged. But there was hardly a day that I didn't come through with a "verbatim."

Were they missing something at City Press — or was I?

They assigned me to cover some of the toughest police and bootleg gang stories that came along in Chicago. I interviewed a guy named Moran in jail. The celebrated gangster took me quite seriously. He wanted to know how a kid like me figured to make it in gangland journalism.

Same with Jake the Barber.

John "Jake" Factor — all right Jake — once was a barber. Never mind that Jake became the greatest con man in the Midwest. Con man — like when a guy schemes to separate you from your money and does just that. And of course not just a little bit of currency was involved.

All I know was that the fires in the steel drums at my parents news stands were burning hot. With yesterday's news. Than which nothing was more alive for Herb Brin.

Here's the story about the Terrible Touhys — and Jake.

A feller named Roger Touhy figured that Jake's son was a prime target for kidnapping. Which Touhy and his cohorts skillfully accomplished. The boy, a student at Northwestern University was dutifully grabbed and tortured and released only after Jake paid off a \$100,000 ransom. A huge amount as prewar kidnappings went.

Then, to add insult, they kidnapped Jake himself. Same ransom.

The Touhys were arrested on Jake's evidence and sentenced to life imprisonment at Statesville Penitentiary, just west of Chicago.

Jake may have thought he was home safe on the gang's conviction — but strange things happen in Chicago prisons. Escapes occur.

The Terrible Touhys burst out of prison with, one must presume, full-blown internal connivance.

Clarence Jensen, a top city press editor, sent me to hunt down Jake the Barber. Thus I was staking out the Belden-Stradford Hotel — an address of elegance on the city's Gold Coast. Here, I was soon to learn, Jake lived in elegance.

One, of course, had to presume that there was bad blood between the rough-assed Touhy Gang and Jake.

The news editor cautioned me to duck at appropriate moments of confrontation, should they

come about. Jake the Barber and the Touhy gang played hard ball.

My upcoming relationship with Jake was an improbable affair. Got to know him well all through his personal rise in status that later took him from the Belden-Stradford to an exquisite home in Beverly Hills, where Mr. John Factor was always, but always, referred to as “Mister Factor.”

John Factor, philanthropist.

Forget the “barber.”

Oddly, he delighted every time I called him Jake. Remembrances of things past, one must presume.

But then, the con games aside, I got to know Jake the Barber as a brave, brave guy.

Never mind that he had been one of the nation’s great confidence men, a fast-buck artist who had the guts to take on the Terrible Touhy gang in Chicago. And survive.

As I said, I met Jake the most hunted man alive, soon after the gang broke out of prison in the early 1940s.

I found a Tribune reporter already waiting in the Belden-Stradford hotel lobby for something to happen. I phoned Jensen to tell him that sitting in the hotel lobby was not my idea of a pleasurable passage of time. So I went up to the Factor apartment, presuming Jake would come out and talk to me. I told Jensen that “that’s were the story really is — or ought to be.”

“Think he’ll talk to you?”

“Why not? No harm in trying . . .”

The celebrated con artist opened the door on my first knock. Invited me in — his right hand thrust into a pants pocket. Wore a clean white shirt and a refreshing smile when I told him I was from the City Press.

“You’re the first newsman to come up here,” he said. “Are the others afraid?”

“Of what: You look like a nice man.

“I see you’re not afraid,” Jake said. “Nor am I.”

Jake pulled his hand out of his pocket to show me a small handgun.

“This is all I need...”

We both laughed.

“That’s going to defend the two of us?”

“No, three. My wife is in the kitchen.”

We schmoozed and that’s how I got to really know Jake the Barber. Max Factor’s brother. Max made his pile in Hollywood — a straight shooter.

The the next several weeks I banged out a host of stories about Jake at the City Press until one fateful day, during a visit to the North Avenue police station on a routine call to check the station's log, all hell broke loose.

A dark-complexioned reporter for the Chicago Sun — now the Sun-Times — shoved me aside to grab the desk telephone to call his office.

Bill Block, the brother of Herblock, the nation's great cartoonist, yelled into the phone: "A shooting? Where? On Leland Avenue . . ."

Block pushed past me, headed for the door — the old fart (some 15 or 20 years older than I was!) was the only beat reporter who had a car. and I could see myself being scooped and blooped on a shooting story. And any shooting story in Chicago is big-time stuff.

And there I stood at the police desk with a finger in my ear. What the hell to do?

A shooting on Leland Avenue. Where the hell was Leland Avenue and how to get there? City Press police reporters, on the munificence of \$25 a week, found it challenging merely to be transported by street cars. And somehow to pay rent and to eat.

A police sergeant pulled me aside: "Did I hear you says Leland Avenue? Just got a call to send a paddy wagon to Leland Avenue. There was a shooting . . ."

Leo Batt, a second Sun reporter, burst into the station. His editor sent him as backup for Block.

This time I grabbed for the telephone and dialed my city desk: "D'ja hear of a shooting on Leland Avenue?" I blurted out.

"Yep," said Jensen, my assignment editor.

"Might be the Touhy Gang . . ." I said, trying to hold it in. (Would he give me the assignment?)

"You're new on the beat. Think you can handle..."

"Damn right!"

"How'll you get there" I don't even have an address."

"So long . . ."

And I dashed out just as the station's paddy wagon was cranking up. Opened the rear door of the wagon and there sat Leo Batt, grinning Cheshire at me.

I promised myself never to ride in the rear of a Chicago paddy wagon again. But it was one way of getting to the scene of a shooting — the address of which I knew not "of."

And I wanted so much to prove to Jensen that I was a full-blown reporter in a city made famous for me by a guy named Ben Hecht. Who attended the Schley School on Oakley Boulevard

near Division Street some 20 years or so before I did. Indeed, 20 years before a guy named Saul Bellow also attended.

The paddy wagon rolled forth. Leo Batt and I said nothing to each other. The driver of the wagon and his helper were talking about a machine-gun shooting. Wh-at?

The rickety vehicle leaped behind a siren and in time weaved to a sudden stop. I got out first. The driver pointed to a brick building nearby and I ran to it. There was no sign of police activity around the building. Leo Batt was sauntering behind me. The day was darkening.

Suddenly Bill Block drove up with his car, an old clunker, of course, and called out: "Where's the shooting?"

Leo shrugged. "How the hell do I know?"

I pushed open a doorway leading to a flight of stairs that faded in the enveloping darkness. A single small bulb offered feeble light on a landing about 20 steps above, rising sharply.

Bill and I pushed up the steps, shoulder to shoulder.

Leo mumbled: "I'm not going in."

I yelled out: "Reporter!" Bill called out: "We're the press!"

At the top of the stairs, a man emerged from the shadows with a submachine gun in his hands, measuring us.

Two dead men on the landing.

I see a face of a guy I somehow recognize.

"who are you?" Bill asked the guy with the gun.

"FBI."

That's all he'd say.

The paddy wagon guys were following us with stretchers.

"Turn around and get the hell out," the FBI man ordered. "All the action's on Kenmore Avenue."

"Where the hell on Kenmore avenue?" I shouted.

Bill Block was already halfway down the steps. Me following.

The two Sun reporters raced for Bill's car.

They wouldn't take me along. City Press is the enemy of established beat reporters. I might scoop them. Wouldn't look good.

After all, they're the pros who've made it to the daily papers.

So they leave me at the North Avenue station, sweating it out.

I called Jensen at the City Press desk and dictated a bulletin that said I recognized one of the

two dead men on the landing to be St. Clair McInerny. Sonavabitch was part of the Touhy Gang. The FBI had gotten two of the escaped desperados. What about the rest?

Jensen couldn't give me an address on Kenmore Avenue and even if he did, I didn't have the taxi fare to get there.

In time, perhaps half an hour, the paddy wagon was loaded and began moving out.

"Get in," the driver tells me.

Me? I'm not going in with two two stiff in the back.

His associate pushes over inside the driver's compartment and makes room for me.

"Where the hell're we going?" I call out. Scared, as one would say, defecation-less.

"we're taking you to Kenmore Avenue. It's almost on our way to the morgue..."

Which they, God bless them, did. Dropped me off a couple of blocks from a building in front of which half a dozen reporters were milling. Including Bill Block, Batt and the city's toughest police reporter, "Wingey" (that's all I knew him as) of the Trib.

One of the City Press guys had warned me: Stay out of the way when Wingey's around. He can kill you.

What the hell.

As I came up to the building, the reporters began pushing on a front door to the apartment building's vestibule. Two FBI agents made it clear that nobody would be allowed upstairs. The press may stand in the vestibule.

"Nobody is getting past this door . . ." Meaning the vestibule's inside door. "Don't try nothing."

"What happened?" Wingey called out to the agent.

"You'll find out later."

A Herald-Examiner reporter who sold furniture on the side — what the hell, it's a living — yelled out: "You can't do this to us. We're the press."

"F--- the press."

The agents went inside a hallway leading to a staircase. I looked around. It was my first stakeout. Is this what Chicago journalism was all about?

What would Ben Hecht do?

What I was about to do.

Because at the that moment, a boy of about 9 or 10 came down the inside stairs and an FBI agent pushed open the inner door of the vestibule for him.

The boy was carrying an empty milk bottle with an note inside. His mission, obviously, to

buy some milk at one of the after-hour food stores on nearby Foster Avenue.

While more and more back-up reporters began converging on the Kenmore Avenue apartment building, I followed the boy through the front door and joined with him as he made his way toward a late-hour delicatessen.

“We ran out of milk,” the boy said.

We walked a few feet. I asked: “What happened here?”

“We were all scared. There was lots of commotion and police . . .”

“Hey, I’ll tell you what. Can you give your mother a note from me?”

“Sure.”

“I’ll have it ready when you come back...”

And I waited for him. Some 10 minutes. Twelve minutes ... and the boy came walking back carrying a quart of milk — the old glass bottle variety. I handed him a note for his mother, which he crumbled into his pants pocket.

The boy walked back to the vestibule with me following. He knocked on the inside glass door, which was opened for him by the FBI agent, and he leaped up the inside staircase.

Bill Block was muttering to Leo Batt that “they can’t do this to us.”

Wingey’s face was storming in anger.

“Open up!” he yelled out. “This is the Tribune!”

The FBI guy inside said something that came through like: “I don’t give a sh--!”

Then a strange thing happened. A woman came down the stairs following the young boy. The FBI agent stepped aside and the boy pointed at me to his mother: “That’s him...”

The agent opened the inside door and motioned for me to come inside. “the lady asked for you. But you’ve got to go to her apartment.”

Which I did, the inner door closing behind me to a hushed, milling group of Chicago’s top reporters.

As I climbed up the stairs following the mother, I could hear Wingey’s rasping voice: “Hey, he’s a reporter!”

“She’s a tenant and she asked for him,” the agent called back.

“Not fair!” exclaimed Block.

For the next 15 hours I telephoned an array of personal reports to the City Press on how the Roger Touhy and Basil (The Owl) Banghart gang was captured by the FBI in a sensational action .

The boy and the very cordial young mother lived on the second floor of the apartment

building. They set up a small desk and phone for me at the front window of the apartment and one by one the other tenants joined me at my “newsdesk.”

Ben Hecht would have loved it.

What happened? Simple. The FBI had been tipped off that part of the gang was holed up in a ground-floor apartment in the building on Kenmore Avenue.

Agents earlier had made it quietly to the Leland Avenue building and bullet-holed two of the gang.

A large contingent of the agents then surrounded the middle-class apartment building on Kenmore Avenue.

Tenants were quietly removed to the top floor of the three-story building.

“It was one family at a time,” the young mother told me. “We were all excited — and frightened at the same time.”

As the evening wore on, searchlights came on, and with the brilliant lights loudspeakers exclaimed: “Roger Touhy and all you guys, come out now, as you are — your hands in the air.”

A moment later: “Do it! Or we’re coming in to get you. Come out now!”

Roger Touhy and Banghart, wearing pajamas, came out along with (two or three gang members — don’t remember their names. Hands in the air.

FBI agents poured into the vacated apartment looking for background evidence on how the gang had been holed up to evade capture.

The City Press editors were ecstatic. We’d beaten the entire city on the Touhy Gang capture, cranking out story after story while the daily reporters were packed solidly by now in the building’s vestibule.

At one point I asked Jensen to phone Jake the Barber at his Belden-Stradford apartment. “Give him my phone number here at the Kenmore Avenue building. I want to talk to him about how it feels not being the most hunted man alive. Again.”

A minute or two later, Jake’s call came in.

“Hi, Herb. They tell me you’ve got this wrapped up.”

“Not entirely,” I said. “How are you handling it?”

“They never got to me. You know I was never afraid of them.”

And he read a prepared statement, ending with: “Herb, I won’t forget you. Thanks!”

Tenants hovered about. I munched on fruit, rye bread and cottage cheese. The young mother offered milk and I was forced to tell her that I hated milk. From delivering so much of it in LA.

For some 15 hours.

The vestibule by this time had been thinned out of reporters. Wingey and Bill Block were gone. I walked out to the elevated station on Foster Avenue, got on a train and conked out. Woke up as the train made the Loop to Lake Street.

As I walked to the City Press offices, not having been to bed for well over 35 hours, everything that happened — from the North Avenue police paddy wagon to the Leland Avenue episode and to the events in the vestibule on Kenmore Avenue — all blurred for me into a kaleidoscope of people and events.

Larry Mulay, the City Press editor, said I was to get a \$35 bonus this week. “you did great!” he said.

In a tolerably little voice, I told him: “Yeah . . .”

Ran into Jake the Barber a number of time in my later work as a feature writer for the Los Angeles Times.

Jake was pulling out all the stops to re-invent his public image. Forget his years of con artistry in Chicago and St. Louis. That was for making money. And he made it big time. Now, he became president of a Hollywood synagogue, was active with homes for the aging, took leading roles in community affairs. Insisted to everybody that they call him “John Factor.”

That could create strange happenings. At one event that was held in a prominent hotel, his wife was being honored by the Jewish community for her devotion to Jewish causes. The master of ceremonies, an aide to Mayor Sam Yorty, was expansive in his praise of the lady.

“And now,” he said, “I give you — Mrs. Barber!”

The silence was awesome.

CHAPTER FOUR:

War Clouds

Hitler was on the move in Europe.

On the American scene, the “thousand year reich” began playing itself out in its own lesser way, in Chicago.

In German neighborhoods, the German-American Bund was in full bloom. The Bund was the power gang in the big cities of America. Chicago was its central core.

I chanced to meet a German-American violinist from St. Louis who acknowledged that where the violin was concerned the Jews were masters of the instrument.

“Nobody but you Jews really know the violin,” he said, adding that Germans didn’t resent violinists like Jascha Heifetz or Mischa Elman.

He offered to take me to the Haus Vaterland and other German social clubs. Just to prove that Germans were against only certain kinds of Jews.

At the clubs I visited, leaflets were given out urging Germans to attend swastika marches in the various city parks.

The marches in Skokie’s Harm’s Park beside a Jewish neighborhood were to be especially ugly. The Anti-Defamation League asked me to monitor them.

Which I did. A frightening exercise.

The last I saw of the St. Louis violinist, he noted my sandy, blond hair and blue eyes.

“You could make it as a German, he said. Laughing.

“Which German? Kant, or Hegel or Beethoven?” I shot back.

Couldn’t help but wonder what had happened to an entire nation that had prided itself as being the most educated of all.

Indeed, I remained, as months went by, as a source of information for the Anti-Defamation League until the bombing of Pearl Harbor, when I tried to volunteer for military service.

Turned down by the Marines, Navy and Air Force because of eyesight problems. A few months later, the Army took me: I-A.

Which gave me several more months as a City Press journalist. Among City Press reporters, I had the dubious honor of turning down three offers of jobs at the Tribune. One at the Sun-Times. My parents were proud.

It was in this rather turbulent period that I came upon the story of Herbert Hans Haupt.

He was one of the 13 German spies who were landed by submarine on the New England coast, instructed on how best to blow up American war plants.

Haupt was given the task of sabotaging the huge Buick plant on the West Side of Chicago.

He was caught in time. A terrorist!

They were all caught in time.

Sabotage in wartime is a hanging crime. Too bad it wasn’t Hitler himself.

But I did go down to the Haupt family apartment on the near North Side. Met his parents and his very pregnant girlfriend.

It all made no sense to the father. Nor to the mother. An eerie, eerie time.

I was asked by the Anti-Defamation League to keep going to the German-American Bund meetings to pick up nazi marching leaflets. I attended one German swastika session in Harms Park. Weird as hell — but as long as they were unable to spot me, it was a “piece of cake.”

Didn't make my father happy. “but you gotta do what you gotta do!”

In time I got to know many of the German bundists. Guess my height of six feet, an inch and a half protected me — along with my blue eyes and blond hair.

A German girl., Kathleen, wanted very much to convert our relationship to somewhat more. She plied me with lots of Rhine wine and seltzer, the standard German-American Bund drink. When that happened, I was thoroughly scared.

ADL would let me off the hook when I'd have collected a full batch of marching leaflets.

Kathleen couldn't understand. “We kin make it,” she said.

I know she spoke a better German than that.

I wanted to tell Kathleen: “We kin not...”

She may want to know what happened to our relationship.

Perhaps she'll buy a copy of this book.

CHAPTER FIVE:

During the Storm of War

I always felt that my vision was perfect. Perhaps not to the standards of a guy pointing a rifle, hoping to make expert with the weapon, but certainly “good enough” to read the literature of a people.

But despite my utterly blue Aryan eyes, I found myself in what is referred to as “limited service” in the U.S. Army.

It happened shortly after Basic Training.

I was assigned to join a combat communications unit gathering at Fort Ord, from which I was supposed to leave for the South Pacific and combat. But two weeks before I was to leave the training camp at Mineral Wells, Texas, there was an accident.

I should have known better, it was a crazy order, but in the Army you just don't question authority. My lieutenant -- named Morris, I think -- insisted that, since I was the tallest in the platoon, I would go first on the ropes. It was a tricky exercise, climbing down knotted ropes from a rock precipice, about a 25 foot drop. After I went, everyone else was to follow, one after another. It

had snowed overnight, and the ropes were frozen. I didn't notice that, until I jumped from the precipice to grab the rope. It was icy, and I slid all the way down to hard granite below. My full field pack and a rifle (unloaded of course) accompanied me. I wound up in the hospital. The lieutenant had made an error. He didn't test the rope, but then I didn't either, so I can't really blame him. It was a silly accident that shouldn't have happened. At least my fall saved the guys in back of me. I cracked the bones in my toes, so I was no longer combat infantry material.

That's why I didn't go overseas during World War II. I had especially wanted to go to Europe, and felt badly about not getting into that fight. I didn't particularly have the hots about going to Japan, although our platoon had made a vow never to be captured by the Japanese, and never to take prisoners. That's how dirty the war was in the South Pacific.

Personally, I felt a dirtier war was going on in Europe, and I wanted to help there all I could. A man is inclined, but others were inclined differently. I had no control over it.⁵

They used me as an “information specialist.” Namely, a reporter. Perhaps one day I'd be eligible to attain the rank of private first class — or perhaps be lucky and win it for the gipper as a corporal.

Col. Hal Stewart invited me to join the public information staff at Camp Wolters Infantry Replacement Training Center at Mineral Wells, Texas. I was kept on in service.

While there, I kicked around a bunch of sweetheart stories. Newspapers all over the country began picking them up, and soon enough I was assigned a photographer, a Jeep and Frances, a lovely lady driver. My photog was a corporal. I was considerably lower in rank than a private first class. But what the hey (or is it hay?) – Frances was a handsome young lady, as Chicky, the photog, recognized at once.

Soon enough I found myself being assigned to interviewing generals such as Stilwell and Leslie Grove, head of the nuclear development laboratory in New Mexico.

Guess I was acquiring some standing behind the scenes with a number of key editors. Army brass would ask me to interview them so they might “tell it all” to the folks back home. Not everybody gets to be an Ernie Pyle in the military.

One day my own general, Bruce Magruder, sent his driver to my shanty “press office” with a strict order: ‘Be at Love Field tomorrow. At 8 a.m.

The Army's chief of staff, Jacob Devers, had asked to be interviewed by me on an important matter.

Magruder's driver was nothing less than a full colonel.

⁵ Everything is relative. I later heard a lot of guys in my unit were slaughtered coming ashore at Buna, in New Guinea.

An order was an order.

It happened that Jake Devers (four sparkling stars!) had asked for me the day the atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima. Guess I was proud that he'd ask in connection with the historic affair.

Gen. Madruder and Gen. Devers were seated in the back seat of the elegant (for wartime) command car at Love Field.

Driver of the car was the above mentioned full Army colonel. Beside him, one Herb Brin, in the front passenger's seat. Stripeless indeed.

Jacob Devers opened the conversation: "I asked for you because you have a way with words."

Guess that's why I made technical sergeant on my graduation to civilianhood.

"Let me guess," I said to the Army's top general. "You want me to write your comments on the atom bomb that was dropped on Japan."

Devers smiled. Gen. Magruder's face was angry as hell. A member of his staff doesn't talk that way to generals.

He'd take care of me later.

"You got it right, Brin," Devers said. "this is a most important story and we've got to warn our soldiers and their families that despite the bomb, nothing's changed. Our boys will have to invade Japan and be prepared to sustain very high casualties. That's the nature of the war which Japan unleashed on America..."

I managed to mumble: "Of course you are not suggesting that the dawn of the nuclear age will have no effect on Tokyo? That the scientists who developed the bomb didn't know exactly what they are doing?"

This time it was Jake Dever's turn to scowl at me.

We rode in silence for the 65 miles or so from Love Field in Dallas, Texas, to Camp Wolters.

"I'll write the story," I assured the generals. Knowing that my private first class stripes were now gone forever.

As the colonel drove me back to the press office I said to him: "Suppose I write two versions for Gen. Devers to select?"

It would be easy enough to write a piece based on the general's point of view. I would tack on the suggestion that dropping of the bomb had indeed changed the course of history.

"Devers could then select the story to send out," I suggested.

I had the two versions at the headquarters office within the hour. I suggested to the colonel that he call me about which version I should send out to the national media.

Half an hour later the colonel phoned to say that Devers had selected my treatment of the atom bomb story for distribution to the national press. “And you are a sonovabitch!” said the colonel. “But you saved the career of a great general.”

The next day a second atom bomb was dropped. On Nagasaki — followed by Japan’s unconditional surrender.

It wasn’t long for Gen. Leslie Grove to become aware of the turn of events that changed the course of military history. He asked for copies of my report.

I met with Leo Szilard, the Hungarian-born scientist, who said the terror unleashed by Germans on the Jews of Europe was the key factor in depriving Hitler of prime atomic research. The nuclear scientists were on strike against Hitler. Even in Germany.

Szilard said that while a refugee in London, waiting for traffic to clear, at a red light, the thought came to him on how to create the first atomic chain reaction. It worked.

It was Szilard who wrote the now-famous letter to Franklin Roosevelt, signed by Albert Einstein, that impelled America to launch its first national atomic research. A multibillion dollar effort that won the war.

My stories as a subPfc proved astounding to me.

And when I put them to the test, they all checked out.

In time I met with Edward Teller, “father of the hydrogen bomb” — who defended Szilard against charges that he was motivated by communist attitudes.

“He was an amazing, honorable scientist,” said Teller during a meeting we had at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

When war ground down to a halt, it was clear that an attachment had grown between Chicky, my photographer, and Frances, our Jeep driver.

Motherhood had overtaken Frances and in time a son emerged. Frances was assigned to special duties and Chicky was sent on to Seattle for separation from the services.

I went back to my past -- and future -- at City Press.

CHAPTER SIX

Back to Gangland!

Upon my separation from military service, City News assigned me to cover the Cook County

Building and the divorce courts, and to do an occasional piece on Chicago's City Hall.

Yes, everything Ben Hecht wrote about in *The Front Page* proved to be absolutely, but absolutely correct. Never encountered such a bird's nest of political idiots such as I found in city and county administration life.

Everybody, but everybody reporting on downtown events, I discovered, was in on the take. It was a two-bit take consisting of ten or fifteen bucks per "monicker" — bucks that went from lawyers to reporters covering the courts, county offices or City Hall.

There was a guy named Dynamite So-and-so who made a career out of monickers, sending half his payoffs back to the editors on duty at the Hearst afternoon daily. A sleazy, but sleazy operation.

The money was turned over by a cadre of lawyers to the beat reporters when an attorney's monicker was used verbatim in some cockamamie story.

Example: Mrs. Josephine Blow complained through her attorney, Able Cox, that her husband molested her in a most heinous way — etcetera, etcetera. When the monicker was printed, Dynamite, or Sam or Tom Mix, would be paid off for the courtesy.

Look, insisted Dynamite, reporters gotta eat. But then, the jails are full of guys with that digestive explanation.

Sleaze was in its finest hour in the courtrooms of Chicago. And the city desks were not far behind. A few bucks, or a few bottles of booze — and like wow!

Dynamite was a real character in those midcentury Chicago days. Since Dynamite was illiterate but worked for a syndicate of magazines, he would ask me to write some of his stories — and would pay a few "tenners" for the service.

I suggested to dynamite that the readers of some of the magazines might like a story about Snapper Charlie.

"Hey," said Dynamite. "you're right!"

Snapper was the guy who stood watch outside of City Hall, waiting for a proper "con" touch to come along. While leaning with his back to the stones of City Hall, his fingers would snap like on fire when he'd come upon a new potential victim.

He'd suggest card or shell games to the targets — and more than enough of these marks would embrace his suggestions of fun in the big city. Especially if the victims came from Iowa or Nebraska. Snapper Charlie, for some reason, had it against traveling gents from those two states. Seeing as how he himself came from Ainsworth, Neb. Funny, but not especially funny.

Charlie said he especially liked the shell games, at which he was adept.

So I wrote a story about Snapper Charlie — and warned folks (especially from Ainsworth) that they would be targeted by Snapper's superb shell games.

Now as things came to pass, economics for Charlie was on the down side and things were getting rough. Snapper Charlie found a lawyer for himself and filed suit against Dynamite.

The lawyer, of course, wasn't in on the monicker racket and didn't know the ins and outs of high-class lawyering.

So as things happened for Charlie, he found himself being arrested some 10 or 15 times a day on one spurious investigation after another.

Three days of questioning — that was long before a plaintiff was read his rights — and Snapper Charlie called out to Dynamite: "Please take them bums off. I haven't slept in days. Please, Dynamite..."

Pouting, Dynamite relented.

"But that SOB had to be learned a thing a two!" mumbled Dynamite.

In a few days, Charlie's business improved. He sent a bottle to the press room.

Even I took a snort.

#

One of my City Press assignments was to cover the various county departments.

That's where I met a short but rather husky man working in the county treasurer's office. A bright man who went by the name of Richard Daley.

Yes, Dick Daley and I hit it off well. Seemed like the brightest of the lot of minor officials who made it to a Downtown office by way of Chicago's bizarre political system.

I mentioned this to a young man covering the county offices for the Chicago Sun, Earl Bush.

Proved to be a fateful day for both.

Daley hired Bush as head of his public relations staff in a subsequent run for public office.

Dick left an incredible imprint as mayor of Chicago. Earl was always with him — except for a brief time that he was convicted of operating some kind of scam involving the "welcome" signs at Chicago's great airports.

#

During one of my visits to Chicago's City Hall, I came to encounter a bunch of payoff documents involving Chicago's huge Consumer Coal Company. The documents pointed to details how Mayor Ed Kelly had been enriched by the largess of the company.

Kelly was head of the infamous Kelly-Nash Machine. As such, he figured that what he did for the company via coal purchases for the city schools was spectacularly O.K.

Which of course it wasn't, as I reported to him as an inquiring journalist.

Got him coal-handed.

"What do you suggest I do?" said the mayor.

"Resign at once," I said., somewhat casually.

"Tell you what I'll do," said Big Ed Kelly the builder. (Which was his political trademark.)

"Get the press together right now in City Hall and I will resign to you personally."

Within half an hour the City Hall press choir came together in Ed Kelly's office.

The mayor called me to his side as he read from a formal document quitting as mayor of Chicago.

The press had a ball with that one. The Hearst American devoted three quarters of its front page to a photo of Kelly handing me his resignation statement.

I don't know how many readers liked that one as the fires in the 55-gallon drums on Kedzie Avenue shot up to the skies.

This was a special event. My beautiful mother had no trouble making out the image of her son on Page One.

But then, it was a case of yesterday's news. Which nobody really reads.

CHAPTER SEVEN

California, For Good

It was the sleaze of journalism in Chicago that done me in. I refused to take a proverbial plugged nickel as a reporter in the Windy City. In the autumn of 1941, I left the City News Bureau to start the Community News Service, in which I covered downtown events for some 120 small weekly newspapers. The editors were grateful for this new extended coverage.

One day while working at the City Press, I suggested to my friends, Earl Bush and Max Sonderby of the Sun Times, that it might be a good idea to start up, on the side, a little community news service, to supply local newspapers with some of the material we covered for the City Press that was rejected by the dailies. That idea caught on as the Community News Service of Chicago. I provided news to 130 small newspapers around Cook County, and Earl Bush covered the radio stations.

I was doing most of the work, getting paid only \$25 a week from the City Press. Max Sonderby was getting \$65 from the Sun Times, and Earl Bush was paid by the mayor's office. I was

poorest guy of the three. I wasn't satisfied with this type of local reporting. I got tired of combing court records for information about births and divorces, the amount of money left in legacies, and so forth, so I told the others that I was going to leave. That level of news reporting was not for me.

I went back to Chicago for the 100th anniversary of the City News Bureau. Max Sonderby had remained with the Community News Service, and had recently sold it to a syndicate there for \$1 million, cold cash. The news service had been my idea, but I left it to go west. Of course, Max put most of his lifetime work into the service.

I felt I needed more of a challenge than local community items. With Heritage I published national and international news of the highest order.

I didn't like the weather in Chicago anyway, so Selma and I decided to move back to Los Angeles. Soon after arriving, I was hired as a feature writer by the Glendale News Press, a member publication of the very large Copley newspapers chain, owners of the San Diego Union Tribune.

First day on the job, a photographer took me out to see the Glendale landmarks. Took me to Brand Boulevard and pointed to overhead wires across Brand. "Once there was a sign here which read: *'Nigger, don't let the sun fall on your back in Glendale.'*"

Like wow! What had I gotten into?

Turned out, I learned soon after, that Glendale was home to numerous members of the German-American Bund. The swastika gents.

No Blacks lived in Glendale. An occasional Jew made his home there. A white Jew, of course. I made my home in Tujunga, some 10 or 15 miles northward toward the mountains (which magnetized me!) and so I applied to the News Press for a job.

Charlie Hushaw, the paper's editor, had heard of City News Bureau in Chicago, was very much impressed. Hired me on the spot. Assigned me to cover city hall, where Glendale councilmen were in a constant fistic battle.

"Treat it light," he cautioned me.

Which I did. For a couple of months, Glendale and I got along famously.

One day a character named Burkheimer invited me into his office at the paper. He was a thoroughly intoxicated, red-faced, nose-pocked guy who described himself as publisher of the News Press. Would I join a group of News Press reporters and photographers to help cover an important story?

What story?

"An FBI raid on a Communist meeting in nearby La Crescenta," he said secretly.

“The first such raid ever in FBI history,” Burkheimer said. “Hushaw says you can be trusted. We’ll have Felix, our top photographer, assigned to you. We meet here at the paper and we join a caravan of cars to where the Communists are meeting.”

I decided to drive my own car, a used Frazer that I managed to buy on arrival in California.

On a side street near the News Press, Burkheimer managed to assemble some half-dozen cars, each with a white towel tied on its rear bumper. “That’s so the FBI will know who we are,” the short, sloppy publisher said. Hushaw said, “This is his show.”

The caravan drove on to a nearly American Legion hall, where we awaited the FBI agents who would conduct the raid at the Communist gathering.

“Where he hell are the FBI guys?” I asked Felix, the photographer who rode with me.

“I see Glendale police officers everywhere,” Felix responded.

Slowly, a caravan of some dozen cars moved out, heading north to La Crescenta — toward a “Communist” meeting.

Felix started shooting exterior pictures and I followed the publisher into the building. In the living room were some fifteen or twenty men and women who were thoroughly frightened by the intrusion.

I began looking for indications that this was a Communist club, wondering where the FBI agents were and when they would go into action.

There were a number of signs indicating that the meeting was under auspices of the La Crescenta Democratic Club.

Suddenly, Burkheimer pushed to the center of the living room, pulled a scroll of paper from his suit coat pocket and began an oration that charged those assembled with being Communists.

“Go home and thank God you live in America. We have no room in America for Communists. You are being watched and in Glendale we don’t tolerate Communists...”

Etcetera.

As Burkheimer began rolling up his “proclamation,” I pushed to his side and demanded: “Where is the FBI. And who gave you authority to break into a home housing a Democratic Club meeting?”

“Just look at these people,” Burkheimer said. “They’re all Communists!”

I did look around. I saw nothing but a group of frightened men and women.

It turned out to be the home of a Democratic liberal, Hugh Hardeman.

“Where is the FBI?” I demanded loudly of the publisher.

“We’re representing them...”

“The hell we are!”

I looked the bastard in the eyes and said that he was a no good sonovabitch and that I quit working for him. On the spot.

I turned to the men and women of the Democratic Club and offered an apology for my presence, got out to my car and drove to the Montrose Sheriff’s Station, several miles away.

I told the sergeant on duty what had happened and demanded to speak to the station captain.

“He lives somewhere in the San Gabriel Valley. Nowhere near here,” the duty officer said.

“Get him on the phone, but right now,” I insisted. “He’s got a tiger by the tail.”

Handed me the telephone.

I told the sheriff’s captain that Burkheimer, whom he knew very well, had lied to me about “an FBI raid,” that I had quit the paper and that Glendale police officers were willing members of the raiding party.

“Turn me over to the officer on duty at the station,” the captain said. “I want a thorough report.”

I used another station telephone to call the Los Angeles Times and was promptly connected with Taylor Trumbo, the night city editor.

Told him the story. Told him of my City Press background in news and that I had quit the News Press on the spot.

“turn the story over to one of my rewrite men,” Trumbo said.

Connected me with Paul Brecht.

I gave Brecht a thorough, blow-by-blow account of the raid in La Crescenta, the assurance to me that it was an FBI raid on a Communist cell meeting, how Burkheimer pulled out his rolled proclamation and that the meeting was nothing more than a gathering of elderly members of a Democratic political club.

Then I told Brecht that I quit the bastard on the spot.

Brecht start laughing.

“Congratulations!” he exclaimed. “I’m turning you back to Taylor Trumbo...”

“That’s one hell of a story, Trumbo said. “I want you to call and talk with our city editor tomorrow morning. Keep in touch with me if other angles on the story come up. This will be front page all over America. I always heard fine things about Chicago’s City Press. You demonstrated it tonight...”

Paul Brecht rode to glory with that story which received major front-page treatment. With his

by-line.

But I felt that I had scored with another City Press “verbatim.”

The story held up even in the halls of Congress, where the Burkheimer raid was denounced by leaders of both political parties.

I received a phone call at my home from a man named Herb Klein, an editor of the the Copley newspaper in Alhambra in the San Gabriel Valley.

“We fired Burkheimer,” Klein said. “That’s a lousy thing he did to you. I always knew him as a drunken stiff.”

This was the same Herb Klein who later served as press secretary to Richard Nixon at the White House.

Klein and I became good friends.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The L.A. Beat

Monday morning, I telephoned Bud Lewis, the Times city editor.

“Come in to see me,” he said. “Make it this afternoon.”

I was there at 1 p.m.

The Los Angeles Times building was awesome, intimidatingly awesome for a former City Press editor gone west from the sticks of Chicago. Anyone in metropolitan journalism could hardly not know the Times’ anti-labor history and its stalwart GOP political bent. I wondered how I’d fit in. If this was a job offer, as it turned out, what about me, an unreconstructed left-wing liberal who was never ashamed to admit that he wrote poetry?

The guard on duty in the Times’ lobby pointed me in the direction of an elevator to the editorial floor. There, a Times reporter met me. He was cordial as hell. Said nice things about the story I had turned in to Paul Brecht. Told me that the district attorney was considering a criminal action to be taken against the Glendale newspaper and its publisher. Also that some 14 Glendale police officers might have to face charges.

“If they do, the D.A. said he may be forced to turn on you,” he warned. “After all, you were there.”

Which left me with a sinking feeling as I was waved in to meet Bud Lewis at the City Desk.

Bud said that he and Taylor Trumbo were impressed with the way I handed the story of the idiotic raid in La Crescenta.

“That’s the good old City Press tradition — which we all know about.”

Then he added quickly: “If you’ll accept it, I would like you to join our staff as a reporter. We need a good feature writer.”

That’s all it takes to get on staff of the largest, most impressive newspaper west of New York?

That’s all it takes.

I vowed to be a darn good feature writer. (And poet, something whispered inside me.)

Big, tall Taylor Trumbo seemed to know about my work at City Press.

Feature stories, I wondered. What the hell are feature stories? All I knew about reporting was to react to assignments from Larry Mulay, the City Press editor.

Trumbo would now be my assignment editor. But I had to come up with ideas for my stories. Oh, other, of course than the routine rewrite job Taylor would toss at me. These I would grind out faster than anyone in the City Room.

Anyway, one of the first stories I suggested to Taylor was for me to do a short piece about the Midnight Mission on Skid Row — which happened to be about four blocks from the Times building, On a street where the homeless gathered for free meals and a bunk.

Trumbo would know in a minute if I’d cut the mustard. He called my suggestion of a Midnight Mission feature “a green suit.” Only Herb Brin would try to sell a green suit to Taylor Trumbo. But doggone — he bought my green suit! And many, many more.

Got to Midnight Mission in time for bed assignment and a snack.

About eight or nine of us drifters were told we’d been given a wonderful opportunity to make things right with our Lord. We were then led through the song Jesus Loves Me, This I know, for which we’d each receive a container of black coffee and a huge doughnut.

I figured a way to beat this, since, of course, I am Jewish.

I crossed the index and middle fingers of my right hand, a signal for God not to believe this, or the words from the rest of us bums. I figured it was little enough to offer — my crossed fingers — to expunge the devilish payment intended for whoever keeps tabs on these things, skyward.

Took a lot of notes when the songtime ended. I sat in one of those mission chairs to put away my “coffee and...”

The coffee wasn’t so bad. Strong as hell. But I took a bite out of the doughnut only to discover to my dismay that it was of the kind that was dipped in lard and forbidden even to a nonpracticing Jew.

I uncrossed my fingers and suddenly came to the realization that I couldn't avoid my Jewishness. Not even with crossed fingers on a story I was doing for the Los Angeles Times.

In the dim evening light, I wrote a poem about a derelict I encountered at Midnight Mission. Here it art:

Derelict

A dream ago I kissed a rose

And reached an apple to the sky

But now I stare at shattered walls

In Midnight Mission passions lie.

I danced on dew a dream ago

And raced a moonbeam in gavotte

But now I sing without a song

In Midnight Mission passions rot.

My legs were strong a dream ago

My arms could lift a tree

But now I sit away the day

In Midnight Mission passions flee.

I held her hand a dream ago

Her eyes contained a sigh

But now a shell of life is left

In Midnight Mission passions cry.

They cry, they cry of dreams ago

As morning seeks the sky

But lost is all, forever lost

In Midnight Mission passions die.

To tell the truth. Taylor liked my story about the derelicts I encountered at Midnight Mission. Got a by-line for the epic. My first at the Times.

He didn't like my poem, however, Not to worry, he said. He and poetry didn't jibe.

"Bring me some more green suits," Taylor said.

Suddenly it occurred to me that Taylor Trumbo looked a lot like Dalton Trumbo of the famous Hollywood Left writers. We never discussed that part of our mutual experiences. But I came up with a wild array of "green suit" possibilities. The more I turned them in, Taylor Trumbo and Bud Lewis liked them.

My work at the Times was a blast.

It wasn't long after my Midnight Mission story broke that the religion editor, Jim "The Bishop" Warnack, and I started exchanging poems. Jim was darned good as a poet. He told me that,

as an atheist, he loved his work as religion editor at the Times. But the toughest time for him was always Easter Sunday, when the Times would feature a “Christ is Risen” poem on the front page – a poem that was supposed to be written by the religion editor.

That was how I was pressed into service writing “Christ is Risen” poems for the Times.

“Herb, you saved my neck, “The Bishop kept telling me. I told The Bishop that those dingles come easy to me. After all, wasn’t Jesus Jewish?

#

At any rate, as time for the court case against the Glendale police drew nearer, the cops demanded of Bud Lewis that he fire Herb Brin. After all, the American Legion sided with the cops who played at being FBI guys.

To Bud’s everlasting credit, he stood firm on his hiring of Herb Brin.

By this time I had attained a young family; a school teacher wife and three small sons. I found a beautiful site in the Flintridge area of town and began building my home – an adobe house. Never worked harder in my life. Nailed down 3,665 square feet of roofing in three days, all the while thinking of “green suit” possibilities that would please Taylor Trumbo.

Up in the mountains of Flintridge, to get water for our tiny subdivision, four of us property owners had to dig a deep, deep well. Our digging found water, and so was born the Flintridge Heights Mutual Water Co. I was elected president.

Don’t laugh.

Had to climb to the top of our mountain every day and turn on the motor that would bring water up to our tiny 1,000-gallon tank. That’s how I became friends with the peacock lady, whose peacocks honked the hills near our water tank.

I suddenly got a feel for mountain living — and on the sly I began honing my poetic skills.

These were glory days for Herb Brin, poet, water company president and Los Angeles Times feature writer who was constantly on the prowl for green suits to sell to Taylor Trumbo.

Oh, the publisher of the Glendale News-Press was found guilty of breaking and entering. So were the Glendale cops. Charges against Herb Brin were dismissed.

Hallelujah!

CHAPTER NINE

Fabulous Fifties

Oh, the stories I wrote for the Times!

Covered the Truman-Dewey election, especially the final vote count, which came in by radio at the posh California Club, where membership was forbidden to folks of Semitic persuasion.

Like I.

Beautiful Bud Lewis figured that the time hath come for the Times' Jewish feature writer (me) to be invited as a guest at the California Club.

It was the classiest steak house in town. The olives were the size of a thumb and a half. The wine, the best California had to offer. I could sense Bud's pixy smile hovering over the California Club. And after all, Dewey was considered a shoo-in as president of the United States.

Bill Murphy, my photographer, and I presented ourselves at the massively restricted club — the idea being I would report on the reactions of the California Republican wizards of commerce to the Truman defeat.

Like I said, the olives were huge. The wine tasty, tasty. The steaks, well, an inch and a half thick. The club members cottoning up to me with suggestions on how to hack Harry Truman down to size.

Delicious were the first returns that came in with Truman slightly, slightly in the lead. I was told: never mind. It'll all change when the real returns come in. One western captain of industry opened up the palm of his hand. "This time we'll crush him!"

Honest. That's what he said. He made a fist.

I phoned Trumbo as our dinners ended.

"Funny thing is happening here at the California Club," I said. "Truman is beating the b'jeeze out of Tom Dewey."

Murphy got some great shots of the rapidly dismaying club members.

"Think you can write the story carefully?" Taylor said.

Piece of cake.

Couple of hours later, after I had phoned in my story, Taylor Trumbo called us back to the Times, Murphy and I hilarious all the way.

Just as we drove up to the Times building, Hotchkiss (Times' managing editor) came out of the building, laughing up a storm. My story had caught his funny bone. Couldn't refrain from slapping his knees. And dancing in glee.

The Chicago Tribune could headline Dewey defeating Truman. But not the L.A. Times.

And like I said: The olives were the size of a thumb and a half.

#

Dismay at the election's outcome was reflected in one section of the city room — the one

headed by Joe Park, our unreconstructed labor editor.

Here it was all gloom city.

Joe Park was famous for his private telephone booth, which he had installed in the city room. He invited me to see the innards of his anti-labor phone booth. There, he took care of them communists. On the wall beside the phone's mouthpiece was a news photo of the beautiful dancer Cyd Charisse, repeated with a large handlebar mustache.

That'll show the commie actress a thing or two.

But things were rapidly changing at the Times.

Albert Goldberg emerged as the music critic. Bob Kirsch was named book editor, and Peter Grant was assigned to cover the San Fernando Valley.

Peter and I got along famously. Often when he'd finish an assignment for a story, he'd telephone the facts to me in Yiddish and I'd have to translate into my strange version of Pigeon English.

I was having a ball at the Times.

Especially when Taylor sent me on assignment to report one Sunday afternoon on festivities at the Hollywood Bowl. It was a Hearst promotion of "I Am An American Day." This I was asked to treat lightly, lightly. After all, we were Hearst's competition.

My photog for the occasion shall remain nameless, as he must – for obvious reasons.

He and I were hustled on stage for a rehearsal of the event's program. Our task was to interview California's two leading religious figures. Archbishop (soon to become Cardinal) Francis MacIntyre and Rabbi Edgar Magnin, of the great Wilshire Boulevard Temple.

The Times' photographer lined the religious figures facing toward the audience that was slated to arrive within several hours, the concert shell of the Bowl framing the background.

While he was arranging the angles for his picture, a famous movie star walked on center stage, wanting to get into the picture — Marilyn Monroe.

Her back was to the religious figures.

Seems that she was dissatisfied with how her breasts were filling out the upper part of her dress, which was made of handkerchief-thin linen. It was a hot, Hollywood afternoon. After all.

The photog joined me as he planned to shoot Marilyn and Magnin from where I was standing.

At that point, the actress reached into the bosom of her dress (her back to the spiritual giants), pulled out her left breast, fluffed it a bit and put it back.

She repeated the performance with her right breast. She wiggled until satisfied, then backed into the photog set-up.

It was only then that the Times photographer woke up to the fact that he had missed the photo opportunity of the year.

Didn't grab the shot.

Rabbi Magnin and I howled about it later at his temple office.

That's how Magnin and I became lifelong friends.

I'm sure that he and the archbishop had a good and healthy laugh at this experience.

And I'll never tell the hapless photographer's name. Never. Never.

CHAPTER TEN

Out to See the Sea

Don't laugh.

Or go ahead and laugh. I sold Taylor on my covering the story of the Red Diamond Stradivarius violin that went out to sea.

It happened at about the turn of the half century, when strange songs were being sung by California folks. Songs such as "Mares eat oats and does eat oats and little lambs eat ivy — a kid'll eat ivy too, wooden shoe?" An idiocy classic.

Believe it or not, there was even a song afloat after a rainstorm which was called "the Thing." About a box lying in the sand and somebody crying: "Get out of here with that umph, umph, umph..." adding of course: "and don't come back no more!"

"Taylor," I said to him, "somebody called in to say he found a box lying in the sand. Looked like a violin was inside. Might make a story."

A green suit.

"You'll sell me on anything to make a green suit out of it," Taylor grumbled.

"Better believe it..."

Then I mused: "But who'd want to sell anyone a green suit that would take him into a storm on a lovely Sunday afternoon in Downtown L.A.?"

Taylor smiled. Winked and said that I'd better come in with a good green suit.

Which I did. I always did.

Turns out that the guy who called in to tip me on the story had taken the box from the beach and stashed it in his locker at a nearby gym. He wanted to get rid of the box, violin and all.

All the while I kept mulling over a sad tale that had earlier been phoned in by a studio violinist,

Sascha Jacobson, who was reputed to be a music professor at the University of Southern California.

Jacobson told me that he had been trapped in his automobile by a flash flood on Pacific Coast Highway near Sunset Boulevard.

He added bitterly that the violin inside was a Stradivarius — the Red Diamond — that was given to him on “permanent loan” by a widow who owned the fiddle.

When the flash flood occurred, Jacobson grabbed the violin case and tried to make his way to a nearby gasoline station. The flood tore the violin case out of Jacobson’s arms and, to his dismay, it carried the violin case into the Pacific Ocean.

Strange things happen when one is out in search of a green suit for Taylor Trumbo. Could the violin in the gym locker be the Red Diamond?

I tried in vain to reach Sascha Jacobson, who was, according to other USC professors, grieving bitterly.

I drove to the gym and met the man who found it. To him it was “The Thing” of that popular Southern California song.

He trust the thing into my arms. Glad to get rid of it.

Was this the errant Stradivarius?

I didn’t know more of what to do with it than the storm — and the sea wanderer who found it.

“Think it can be saved?” the finder asked me.

“Of course it can be saved,” I said, all too bravely.

The finder left for his gym exercises, whatever they were. I went hunting for a telephone directory.

I figured, for my story for Taylor, the violin would simply be wiped dry and I’d deliver it to Sascha Jacobson personally.

A Timesman as hero.

The first violin repairman I called, Hans Weisshaar, set me straight. It was a major, major job. A Stradivarius violin depends for its tone not only on the selection of woods and contours for the instrument’s body... “but we’ve got to save the violin’s varnish.”

The tonal superiority of a Stradivarius depends on a combination of all these factors.

Weisshaar undertook to save the Red Diamond.

It was a meticulously delicate task. A far cry from my original estimate that all the repairman would have to do is wipe the instrument dry, obtain a new case for the fiddle and I’d come in to write my green suit for Taylor Trumbo.

And all’s well that ends well.

Weisshaar explained that he would have to take the violin apart to protect the varnish and to make sure that the bare wood surfaces would dry out at a slower pace to equal that of the varnished pieces.

“The varnish is what gives a Stradivarius its tone,” he said. “Lose the varnish and you’ve lost a treasured violin.”

Weisshaar said that the Red Diamond was of dark wine finish with “an abnormal amount of original varnish. Had the repair attempt been delayed another 24 hours, the instrument would be lost.

An entire musical community was wrapped up in the attempt by Hans Weisshaar to save this highly treasured violin.

As it turned out, the operation was a success and the patient lived.

Sascha Jacobson got his Red Diamond back.

Of course, he fiddled with it for me.

I never heard so beautiful a tone in my life.

Taylor got more than he bargained for.

Anyway.

I never asked whether he sent a bill to the Times.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Tears for a Little Tramp

The toughest story of my life at the Los Angeles Times was the time Charlie Chaplin said goodbye to Hollywood.

To me. Since this book is somewhat of a memoir, it seems necessary to report that Charlie would figure into it early in my life.

I was given the assignment by the Times to cover Charlie’s departure from the Hollywood that his genius helped to create. And after all, the Los Angeles Times was Hollywood, somewhat, long before Charlie came along. Long before Hollywood and the two-reelers discovered California’s sunshine. And now the great Chaplin was departing, forever. Driven out by a vicious thing called “McCarthy-ism.”

At this point I must hasten to note that Charlie and his moving pictures had a lot to do with the personalities that evolved with World War I America. And in my case, even with my name — Herbert. Herb, now.

Herbert Rawlinson, of course, was the prod.

How does it all tie together?

I came to the first grade in 1920 at the Schley School in Chicago (on Oakley Boulevard near Division Street) at the age of five. Ben Hecht and Saul Bellow also attended the school — Hecht, 20 years earlier.

Although my birth certificate had named me Henry, to my parents I was Hymie (named for my father's mother Chaya, meaning life).

Hymie Brin. Chaim. What's wrong with that?

Miss Daley, my Irish first grade teacher, insisted that Hymie was "too Jewish" a name and that I should come back next day with another name.

I went home crying.

To all the world I was Hymie. In my mind's eye — I was Hymie.

After all, I was Hymie to everyone who came with me to the nickel show on Western Avenue. I WAS Hymie, just like Charlie Chaplin was Charlie.

I knew Charlie liked my name. He would fall all over in the screen as my friend in "The Kid." Oh, he ate shoe leather in the Yukon gold fields just to make Hymie laugh. That's what he would do. Honest.

My father had a suggestion for my name problem.

"Let's go to the nickel show and see if Charlie Chaplin might have a solution."

So, after supper Pa took me to the movie, which alas didn't play Charlie Chaplin that night. Instead it was showing "Hutch of the USA," starring Herbert Rawlinson.

I knew Charlie Chaplin was sending me a message. A big, strong American was playing with a name like Herbert.

"Pa?"

"Yes, son."

"Pa, kin I have the name Herbert?"

"Of course, Hymie. I will send a note to the teacher. You give her the note and from now on you will be Herbert Brin."

"Thanks, Pa."

That's how I named myself, with an assist from Charlie Chaplin.

Pa and I walked home past the streetcar barn at Division and Western Avenues, only a block away from the two-reeler nickel show.

"Let's go in, Herbert," Pa said.

And he introduced me, with my new name, to the game of checkers at the car barn.

Every day, after school, Pa would find me playing checkers with the motormen and conductors of Chicago's great streetcar system.

I beat 'em all.

I mean, Herbert beat them all! Except on Claremont Avenue, where they still called me Hymie.

Did you think people stop using old names after new names are established?

My brother, Robert, told me about the kid in the Bronx named Pierpont Cohen, whose mother would call him to come upstairs after school for his daily slice of bread and butter. She would call out: "Pierpontelleh, Pierpontelleh..."

Naturally, Pierpont Cohen would duck under a porch, hiding.

"Pierpontelleh! Pierpontelleh!" the mother would call.

One of the guys on the block would then growl: "Hey, shtunk — your mudder's calling you."

On Claremont Avenue in Chicago they called me Hymie. To this day, somebody will remember me as Hymie.

Especially a guy named Benny Fineman.

Benny came up to me once when I was sailing some chips of wood in the street curb gutter and said to me: "Hymie, do you know how babies are born?"

"Sure. Your Ma goes to Iverson's department store, where they sell babies."

"No, don't believe that junk. You know now babies are really born? Your fodder phuks your mudder..."

I looked up at Bennie Fineman. Chased him all over the neighborhood. Did I beat him up in the Schley schoolyard! I chased him through the shul and out in back into the synagogue's permanent succah, where I pounded away at tim, yelling: "My fodder don't do that to my mudder!"

Benny Fineman came ut of the fracas with two shiners. "Beauts," as they called them in my neighborhood.

#

But Charlie Chaplin.

At L.A.'s handsome Union train station on Alameda, near historic Olvera Street, the railroad folks were collecting a few cars to be tied to an engine that would take the Chaplin family to New York, for transfer to a ship bound for Europe.

I was welcomed aboard the train by a number of the Chaplin youngsters.

Oona and Charlie invited me to sit opposite them for a short, intimate interview.

It was a pleasant Hollywood day. The sun was warm overhead. I was the only reporter to

come out and see Charlie Chaplin off for exile in Switzerland, because America had a fever. It was lashing out at some of those who loved it most. Making up black-lists, harrassing people because they were friends of friends of some people whose compassion was a bit bigger than their political judgement. Chaplin was no communist, but there he was on that train, shunned by a town he had helped make, with only me to see him off.

Broke my heart.

The Chaplin kids were having a lark, an adventure. But Charlie's eyes were huge, big and round. Oona, a handsome, almost middle-aged lady, daughter of the playwright Eugene O'Neill, carried off the historic moment quietly. Charlie was bitter about the events that crushed him politically in the Hollywood that his brilliant acting career was instrumental in creating.

He wasn't merely grumbling. His very eyes told me, and perhaps through me, the unkindness he felt that such a day would come upon him — to be hounded out of Hollywood.

"It's not your fault," Charlie said to me. He wouldn't place the blame on me personally.

I wanted very much to tell him how deeply his motion pictures affected me. ,But he seemed to know this already. Had read many of my "green suits" in the Times.

The conductor sauntered past us and said the train was getting ready to move. I'd have to get off.

Charlie followed me to the exit steps and I got off the train.

Charlie, holding on to a door rail, came down the steps of the sleeping car, waving at me. Waving at me. Waving at me. His eyes the size of saucers.

Waving at me.

Waving at me.

I, in turn, waved my heart out. I was Hollywood. There was no one else of Hollywood to see him off.

Broke my heart.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The End of Innocence

It took a while after the 'liberation' of Europe in 1945, but gradually the news came out -- in horrible bits and pieces that added up to a single word: *Holocaust*.

Human languages are incapable of describing the extent of the horrors inflicted on a people of history by the death camps of Europe.

Elie Wiesel, Noble peace prize laureate, suggested use of the word “Holocaust” to describe the Hitler events of the war years.

Compared to the events that happened, Elie told me, even that word is terribly inadequate.

Thousands of Jews fled for their lives to Palestine, the name given by Rome to the Jewish nation. Israel, today.

There was hardly a Jewish person alive who did not suffer tragic losses in Germany’s bizarre attempt to eliminate an entire people from the face of the Earth. From history.

My father’s brother Max Dobrzinsky, was the rabbi of Metz, France. He and my aunt and their eight daughters had disappeared at Auschwitz in the dark clouds that came out of those terrible chimneys.

Henri Glicenstein, a cousin to my father, was a world-famous sculptor who had twice won the Prix de Rome. His Moses figure is a notable one at the Vatican. The Glicenstein Museum, in Sfad, Israel, is a national treasure. Gone, along with all his family.

All of which is backdrop to why and how I left the Los Angeles Times early in 1954.

Why indeed did I leave the Los Angeles Times and my exciting “green suits”?

The Jewish Journal, Oct. 12, 2001, wrote:

“Brin started Heritage Publications in 1954 on the back of an anti-Semitic incident while he was a reporter at the Los Angeles Times.

“One evening Brin returned to Times-Mirror Square to find hundreds of Jews gathered in front of City Hall for a David Ben-Gurion visit. A fellow Times writer cracked, ‘They oughta drop a bomb on those people.’ That defining moment sealed Brin’s destiny. he quit the Times to serve ‘those people’ — his people.”

The home I built in the elegant Flintridge-La Canada area, of hand-crafted adobe on some three acres of land, provided me with the initial \$17,000 mortgage which I required to launch my original Heritage Jewish newspaper, one that flourished, enabling me a decade later to build our Heritage press facility free and clear of encumbrances.

It was a long, hard journey, trying to revitalize Jewish journalism in California -- a state that was fast becoming one of the key surviving realms of Jewish life on Earth, rivaling old New York and, yes, Israel, in vitality and importance to a people’s survival. Yes, you can tell I felt a sense of mission! During the years that followed -- starting with a tiny office on La Brea Avenue, then

another on Wilshire near La Brea -- I put in several lifetimes, helped by good friends and a tiny staff who shared my passion. A passion to help bring together a community out of what had been a meek collection of migrants to the Sunshine State. Here, a danger was not only prejudice, but also assimilation, the loss of identity that could erase a people as surely as its enemies. see

FOOTNOTE.6****

Our fledgling paper engaged in immediate battle with Gerald L. K. Smith and all of the Nazis. The *raison d'être*, Heritage's reason for being, were our constant campaigns against the Nazis and other hate-mongers. The paper attained a national reputation for doing just that. It got so rough for Gerald L. K. Smith that he and his cohorts filed a lawsuit against Heritage for \$20.5 million dollars. Attorney Frank Mankiewicz, who later became press secretary for John F. Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy, defended Heritage against Gerald L. K. Smith. Smith's lawsuit was tossed out of court as a frivolous attempt to silence Heritage. Other journalists, like Paul Coates of the Mirror, and Bill Stout of CBS, were also sued by Gerald L.K. Smith, for \$10,250,000 each. The actions were dismissed against all of us.

Heritage took on Coast Federal Savings, who had hired a press agent by the name of Tom Sullivan, who was intimately connected with the hate-mongers. Sullivan had made the preposterous claim that the Jewish community was behind the mental health system of California, calling the mental health system a nefarious development instituted by Jewish psychologists and psychiatrists. I went after Coast Federal Savings until they fired Sullivan. At a higher level, we revealed Joe Crail as the guy who had started this slander against the Jewish community. As a result of our investigation,

⁶ (Still sparse about: Hardship and hard work getting the paper up and running. Gaining credibility. Resistance and opposition. Divorce. Support from the community enabling the move to Vermont.) It was a rough beginning. I thought we'd receive a better response from the local Jewish community. As a Los Angeles Times feature writer, I had dreamed of going into publishing. I was advised by Joe Roos, a very good friend of mine, who had been a fighter against the Nazis. As my friend, he strongly advised me against going into the business of Jewish publishing, and to stay with the Times instead. But from his official standpoint as a Counselor on Community Relations for the Jewish community, he would welcome my participation, because he knew that it would create a new personality in the struggle of Jewish people for survival after the Hitler years. This was only nine years after the end of the war. It was a dramatic time for anyone to go into Jewish journalism.

Everywhere I went in soliciting business for Heritage, I found that I was preceded by Joe Cummins of the competing *B'nai B'rith Messenger*. Joe Cummins was giving Heritage a bum rap, describing my paper as a fraud and a fake. He was out to destroy us before we even got off the ground. This episode reverberated against him, ten or twelve years later, when I filed a lawsuit against Joe Cummins. I charged him with libel for describing me as a Communist. This was absurd, because I was the most un-Communist target that he could have picked. (This case is documented in back issues of Heritage, and I won't go into all the details here.) When the case came up, the jury awarded us \$100,000 damages. The judgment was appealed, and the appeals court completely threw out our damages. The judgment stood, but we would receive no damages. Heritage appealed to the United States Supreme Court, but they didn't choose to accept the case. Par for the course. On the other hand, one of the appeals judges gave us an opening to file another lawsuit on the same basis. Meanwhile, Joe Cummins died at the age of ninety or ninety-five. He went to his grave knowing that Herb Brin and Heritage had beaten him in court.

Joe Cummins was a lawyer from Detroit, who entered Los Angeles journalism by buying the *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, a newspaper published by the Temple B'nai B'rith, on Wilshire Boulevard. That in itself is a complicated story, which has been covered by Rabbi Will Kramer, head of the Western Jewish Historical Review. He was one of my witnesses that we were telling the truth about the aims of our newspaper in San Diego.

When I bought the newspaper, the *Southwest Jewish Press*, published in San Diego, I incorporated the establishment date of that newspaper into the masthead of Heritage, to indicate the continuity of the Jewish press. The court recognized this as perfectly legitimate, because we printed the names Southwest Jewish Press and Heritage in tandem. The earlier date was part of our history. (The lawsuit concerned both this date issue, and being called a Communist). While a date was being set for a new trial, Joe Cummins' widow agreed to settle the case out of court, so the estate paid Heritage \$15,000. Out of that money, I gave \$6000 to Dan as a downpayment on a house.

journalists Herb Brin, Bill Stout and Paul Coates, were all honored by the California Mental Health Institution with the highest award they give to the public media. It was quite an honor that a little paper like ours attained that recognition. Joe Crail was my pigeon. To this day, they remember what we did to halt Joe Crail's activity.

Another struggle was against the El Segundo American Legion. When Heritage revealed that the group was tied in with the Nazis, the local chapter was thrown out of the legion. There are scores of stories to show why I left the Los Angeles Times for a very special form of Jewish journalism.

*Unfortunately, one casualty during these years was my marriage. Long tempestuous, it ended in strong emotions that lasted much too long. One can only dream, regret, and wish things could have been otherwise. And hope that other generations do better.

In 1960 I was invited by the White House to go to Paris to cover the historic summit conference between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, at the Palais Chaillon. I got my eldest son accredited as the youngest credentialed journalist to this summit conference in order to take him along. Stan was eleven at the time.

I was asked by television station KTTV, Channel 11, to shoot photographs of the Paris conference. The station gave me a camera and an hour's worth of instruction. I shot all kinds of pictures. Remember, there were no satellites at that time, beaming instantaneous news. Instead, we sent the undeveloped film by way of Orly airport, using a chain of American airline pilots. Fourteen hours to Los Angeles. We beat the Associated Press, and all the other major stations, including NBC and CBS.

Of course this was the summit conference where Khrushchev refused to engage in discussions with Eisenhower because of the capture of Gary Powers, the U2 pilot who had been shot down while flying surveillance over the Soviet Union. Khrushchev considered that to be an abuse of international decency, and demanded an apology from Eisenhower. This was an international scandal that we got on tape for KTTV.

From Paris, Stan and I went on to Rome, where we covered the pre-Olympics, telling of preparations for the summer Olympics. Then Stan and I flew to Israel, my first visit. That first evening, I put Stan to bed at the King David hotel, then I went outside for a stroll to breathe in the history of our people. Walking down the main street in front of the hotel, I was approached by, of all things, a lady of the evening! Oh, she didn't score with me! So my first contact with Israel was with a prostitute. You have to have all elements of a nation, and Israel had them in spades. When I heard people singing in Hebrew in the cafes of Tel Aviv, I was sure Israel had arrived.

Around the mid seventies, after graduating from Brandeis University, then doing Journalism School and Berkeley and a solid stint at Good old City News in Chicago, my son youngest Dan joined the Heritage staff. He took over as editor, and kicked me upstairs, where I belonged. I was lousy as an editor, but I was a damn good feature writer.⁷

I also continued writing poetry across these fertile years.

My first book of poetry, Wildflowers, was published in 1965, followed by five others -- Justice, Justice, Conflicts, My Spanish Years, Poems From The Rubio and a cry in the night -- Nobody Died Laughing: Poems of Witness to Millennia of Madness Against the Jews.

As a poet, I became more widely known around the world than I had become as a local Southern California Jewish journalist. SO why do I hardly mention those books here? What could I say about them that they do not say for themselves? That's what poetry is. It speaks for itself, like all art. I'll include a few samples later on in this volume.

There was also nonfiction, wearing my 'hat' as a Journalist. During the 1980s I was invited by the German government to visit the new Germany, post-Hitler. From my interviews with German officials, I wrote the book, Where are the Children? -- chronicling the Jewish holocaust in my own passionate style. I wasn't objective. About this topic, there is not objectivity.

When we finally moved the Heritage Offices -- and our new printing plant -- to their new home at Vermont and 22nd Street, our neighbor was the great University of Southern California. I soon learned that its president, John Hubbard, was emotionally tied to Saudi Arabia, which, it turned out, was the source of much of the school's financial resources.

Hubbard went so far as to accept an endowment of several million dollars from Saudi Arabia for the establishment of a chair at USC in Middle East studies. The department would be barred to Israeli students.

Then, to celebrate the school's glowing relationship with the Saudis, Hubbard accepted an invitation that would honor him at a banquet sponsored by earlier graduates of USC living in Ryadh.

The banquet honoring Hubbard in Saudi Arabia would not have been a notable one but for his inability to refrain from quipping at the event: "Allah is a Trojan."

The laughter, as Hubbard knew, would be immediate and highly quotable.

Hubbard returned to his university seat in Los Angeles to joyful glances from among his Arab

⁷ My middle son, David Brin -- the well-known science fiction author -- wrote for Heritage at various times, starting in 1962 when he accompanied a bus tour across America, sending dispatches from states all across this beautiful country, which we carried in the paper.

students — and a developing storm from the faculty senate.

And from the school's new neighbor — Heritage.

Allah was not a Trojan for long.

Hubbard soon was succeeded by Steven B. Sample, one of the foremost educators in the nation.

My Father, My Hero

My father was no hero

In the war against Japan.

Soldiers, if they live to tell it

Become storytellers

About the wars against Japan

Or the German

Or the Kaiser (there is a difference!)

My father was no hero

In his reluctant war against Japan:

A baker to the czar

He killed no one

Except, perhaps

With the qualities of bread.

But there was an insistency

About my father, my hero

That one points no weapons

For a government of pogrom

Even against Japan,

An insistency that one must flee:

"Go West, young man, go West!"

To Ellis Island?

To the Yukon?

The tales he'd weave about the Yukon

He was not to see

And he left the Brazos River

In Texas, to me

Later, later

For my own war against Japan

A storyteller too, and not a hero

Not a hero, indeed.

Like father

Like son.

To Chicago, my city by the sea

Oh the legacy he left, here

For me

And the stories he told

And his dreams would enchant my dreams

With their many rainbowed possibilities.

Each night, Peter Rabbit and I held tryst

Or was it time for Tom Sawyer and Huck

Or the Zionist dreams of Theodore Herzl?

Never mind. All were tucked away

By my father, my hero

Who told his stories to me

Only to me.

They told of loftier forms of heroics

By my father, the sorcerer of ideas

And possibilities

Who promised me that life would be

measured

By insightful men and women

Who stalk the earth

Seeking beauty, touching stars.

And he said:

There would be time for singing

And there would be time for song.

July 2 and 3, 1994 Chicago and the Rubio

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Schindler's List

The distinguished historian-biographer Neil Baldwin noted that the Ford Motor Company recently made television history when it became the sole sponsor of the film Schindler's List over NBC.

The occasion was Feb. 23, 1997.

Earlier, he had written in his book, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, that Ford had alienated American Jews to such an extent that "on the edge of World War II . . . they had virtually stopped buying Ford products in the most complete boycott of automotive vehicles by any group in American history."

I agree, the Ford Motor Co. today is not the same Ford Motor co. that reflected the Jew-hatreds of its founder. Henry Ford devoted a part of his bitter lifetime to the destruction of the Jewish people.

But the name's the same. God help us all.

The nefarious Dearborn Independent and its publication of the bastard "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" reflected the worst of the flivver giant.

I must admit that Ford's sponsorship of Schindler's List was a brilliant ploy by the latter day Ford Motor Co. But, then, NBC should have known better. Indeed, there was no one around to ask what Henry Ford had done with his Hitler medals. The war in Europe had long since ended. How many of us are left to ask key questions?

Who is left to ask a lot of delayed and delayed questions of Henry Ford? Of Charles Lindbergh? Of Thomas Watson?

Lucky Lindy, we knew.

We knew Tom Watson, the robber baron founder of International Business Machines. IBM.

When the Hitler regime declared war on the United States after Pearl Harbor, Watson had the decency to send back his medals to Hitler.

But Tom Watson had already done his worst. His system of card cataloguing had already supplied Adolph Hitler with the names and addresses of virtually every Jew in Europe.

Men, women and children.

Why this tangent piece about the sponsorship of a movie, Schindler's List?

Because I wrote Schindler's List!

Here's how.

It was early in the 1980s that I received a phone call from Rabbi Jacob Pressman. Would I come to his study to meet with a congregant named Leopold (Paul) Page?

"He has a story about the Holocaust and wants to tell it to you," said the rabbi, spiritual leader of Temple Beth Am of Beverly Hills.

I dropped everything and headed for Beth Am.

I had never heard of Paul Page, as the rabbi referred to him.

But as the rabbi was a friend, you do things when such a friend calls.

"Paul's been trying to get someone — anyone! — interested in a story about a nazi who single-handedly saved the lives of some 1,300 Jews from the death camp at Auschwitz," Pressman said.

"Nobody wants the story," Page cut in. "He saved my life and I've got to tell it."

Rabbi Pressman noted that Holocaust stories had acquired a "kiss of death" quality and nobody would touch them.

The rabbi looked deeply within me. "What can you do, Herb?"

I took down the story from Paul Page. It was a bizarre tale I heard for some two hours. I took down the details of a whiskey-drinking womanizer named Oskar Schindler and his determination to save his Jewish workers at an enamelware factory near Kracow, Poland — on the outskirts of Auschwitz.

It was a strange story about a nazi and of the humanities reborn in him.

"Run it in your Heritage," the rabbi said. "Something might happen."

Which I did. Ran it serial fashion for three weeks as my cover story in Heritage.

The story got a lot of attention in Hollywood. Howard Koch of MGM called me three times, wanting the rights to the story. I turned every caller over to Leopold Page, who assumed to handle film production on behalf of all the Schindler survivors in California.

But Page was unable to conclude a deal with any of the MGM callers.

Page made copies of my story and had them on display at his handbag repair shop in Beverly Hills. Promoting the story to anyone who might come along to read it.

That's how he came into contact with a visiting Australian novelist, Thomas Keneally.

Page offered him a copy of Heritage's Oskar Schindler story and the Aussie writer extended the story into book form. Schindler's List was an immediate, surefire success.

It was only at this point that Steven Spielberg came into the picture and produced one of the

most notable films of all time.

Not once did Spielberg discuss the role of Rabbi Pressman in calling me to write the story. Not once was I contacted by Spielberg.

I let the word out in Hollywood that I would make no issue of the original story which I had written at the behest of Leopold Page, the true promoter of the story. Page did get portrayed as a major character in the movie.

One doesn't make an issue over a Holocaust story.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

Fighting Hate

Reporters often encounter strange events in history. As editor and feature writer for a small newspaper serving Jewish communities of Southern California, I had a ball encountering hatemongers operating in areas served by Heritage Southwest Jewish Press.

(Hatemongers – the tiny handful of mongers who hate Jews and/or other people.)

When I left the Times, the single most important monger I came upon in Southern California was a guy known as Gerald L. K. Smith

Smith was a sinister minister and pastor from Shreveport, Louisiana – an ally of the political kingfish Huey Long. He was also associated with a gent called William Dudley Pelley, head of America's native Silver Shirt Movement.

And he was a pal of Father Charles E. Coughlin, described by the Anti-Defamation League as the Jew-hating "radio priest."

ADL charged that "Smith had been teacher, mentor or associate of most of the important anti-Jewish propagandists of the mid-century years."

Gerald Smith had an assistant "pastor" who was founder of a church called The Church of Jesus Christ Christian. His name: Wesley Swift.

Swift begat two assistants of his own — Richard Butler, a Lockheed engineer who later founded the brutal Aryan Nations movement, and Col. William P. Gale, an aide to Gen. MacArthur and founder of a hare-brained group call the Posse Comitatus.

Nice guys, all. They bred killers at Hayden Lake, Idaho.

Only Gerald L. K. Smith had what might be considered a sense of humor. Somewhat.

It took a guy like Gerald Smith to buy a Victorian home and some 167 acres of land in

Arkansas to arrange for the erection of a seven-story concrete monument to himself at Eureka Springs. The monument was a huge figure of Smith, his arms stretched out in a gigantic cross.

“Christ” in concrete.

All these guys were to become my pigeons for the next two decades.

#

Gerald Smith’s bitterness against the Jews of America ended when it came to visiting Jewish-owned antiques stores in Beverly Hills. Jewish antique dealers sadly-sadly found him to be an excellent customer. His purchases were regularly trucked to his home in Eureka Springs.

Wesley Swift offered a highly unusual perspective for his own church philosophy. He insisted that his Christian Identity Movement was dedicated to proving that Christian members of the church were the true descendants of the Biblical Israelites and that modern Jews were not Jews at all but descendants of the devil.

To assert that premise took some talking by Wesley Swift. Which, of course, steamed him up. When he spoke at the Embassy Auditorium near downtown Los Angeles, Swift would stride from side to side in the manner of small boys trying to repress the urge to go to the bathroom.

To many viewers he came to be known as “Shifty Legs” Swift.

When Swift died, Richard Butler reverend-ized himself and moved the church to a 34-acre compound at Hayden Lake, Idaho.

Col. Gale absorbed the remaining Swift members as part of his newly-created Posse Comitatus.

Two killer gangs emerged.

#

Gerald Smith’s reach embraced a leading California haberdasher, one James Oviatt.

Oviatt, in the post war years, was gung ho for a group known as the John Birch Society.

The haberdasher was also a patron of Wesley Swift. From his elegant store in the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel, Oviatt mailed packets of hate literature to his store’s clients, including materials based on the historic fraud of anti-Semites: The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion.”

Well.

The material I had on Oviatt was unassailable.

Wrote about it at length in Heritage.

My references to James Oviatt were picked up by TV personality Paul Coates and radio commentator Bill Stout.

Oviatt promptly filed three lawsuits, one against Paul Coates for \$10,250,000, one against Bill

Stout in the same amount, and one against Herb Brin. The action against me sought \$20,500,000.

I called an old friend, Frank Mankiewicz, a key staffer of the Anti-Defamation League, to take on our legal defenses.

“I ain’t got no \$20 and a half million bucks,” I said to Frank.

The Oviatt family got together and took over the case from James Oviatt. Dropped it. Closed the store.

So you see...

#

Frank in time introduced me to Bobby Kennedy and to the staff of Bobby Kennedy for president — including the utterly brilliant, and charming, Mary Jo Kopechne.

Frank was to be Bobby Kennedy’s press secretary.

In time.

In time.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Bobby... and other martyrs.

When Bobby Kennedy ran for president in 1968, in my view he was the superior presidential candidate of any party that year.

His campaign was strong, cultured and trustworthy.

Frank Mankiewicz, as director of the campaign, assured that on many levels.

It was not unexpected that many of the Heritage staff would join me to volunteer our support for Bobby Kennedy. Indeed, we were gung-ho for him. We detected a sense of decency in this campaign.

To help Bobby capture the electoral votes of California seemed to be the least we could do to express our gratitude for his unwavering support for the State of Israel.

I worked side by side with his press secretary, Mary Jo Kopechne, in Bobby’s Wilshire Boulevard office only blocks from my own Heritage office.

As expected, I was invited on election night to attend Bobby Kennedy’s victory party — should he win in California.

For the event, the Kennedy entourage took over the well-known Embassy Auditorium in the Ambassador Hotel. It was a free and open party and it seemed that anyone interested could attend.

It was inevitable that whiskey freeloaders would easily hustle their way into the throng. Also, an intense, coatless guy who just wanted to look around was let inside by the doorkeeper.

I'm not sure that I saw Mary Jo Kopechne on the rostrum when Bobby gave his speech thanking California voters for the powerful bloc of votes he'd won in the startling election.

#

"Let's go on now and win all the other states," Bobby told the gathering. He looked for all the world like the next president of the United States.

Bobby was led off the rostrum by Frank Mankiewicz and directed into a pantry through the auditorium's kitchen. This, to avoid the milling Kennedy supporters in the main auditorium.

I watched as the intense, coatless "foreign" young man followed the Kennedy party toward the hallway. Roosevelt Grier celebrated football star, made up the rear of the Bobby Kennedy party.

I had been content to sit on the rostrum only about 20 feet from the doorway, waiting for a band to start playing.

It was a happy party that entered the hallway. But the party's voices were suddenly punctuated by a series of five or six gunshots.

Women screamed, "Oh my God!"

Men screamed.

A woman came rushing out of the pantry with an ice pail in hand.

"We need ice! We need ice!" she shouted.

I was stunned. "Who needs ice?" I wanted to ask.

She dashed off to where she presumed was the bar.

I tried to enter the kitchen doorway but was kept out by the football star, Rosie Grier.

The huge football player, his head hanging down, had subdued and captured the would-be assassin, Sirhan Sirhan.

The mortally wounded Bobby Kennedy was rushed by ambulance to the nearby Hospital of the Good Samaritan.

It was impossible for reporters to get close to Bobby as he was carried out of the hotel for transport to the hospital.

The football star embraced me and sobbed into my shoulder. Then he broke away muttering: "I coulda killed him! I shoulda killed him!"

He broke away and grabbed a large lobby chair and hurled it into a water fountain in the lobby of the hotel.

His shoulders shook, sobbing. He was led away.

I was stunned beyond belief. How could this have happened to the nation's first family, twice?

Maybe Bobby will come through. Maybe he'll come through.

For many of us it was a sleepless night. I wanted very much to speak with Mary Jo or Frank Mankiewicz.

I left the Embassy Auditorium for my home. I never returned to revisit the scene of the tragedy.

#

But I did return several hours later to join in what had become the death watch for Bobby.

How could Sirhan Sirhan have happened? But he did.

Pundits at the hospital suggested that if Bobby lasted to midday, he would stand a good chance of making it.

All hopes, however, were dashed when the press was collected and told to go the hospital auditorium to hear a report from Mankiewicz about Bobby's condition.

Bobby Kennedy had expired.

Tragedy had once again found the Kennedy family.

#

But hardly not the last time.

For Mary Jo Kopechne, Bobby's take-charge secretary, had taken ill at a dinner party near her home and was placed in the back seat of a car charged out to Senator Edward Kennedy.

Edward would drive her home.

The car got out of control, he later told state troopers, and tumbled off a bridge and into the waters of Chappaquidik.

Ted Kennedy said he managed to push open the front door of the car and he swam and made it to shore.

The waters overwhelmed Mary Jo on the back seat and she perished.

These things happen in life.

And death.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Israel and More

There was this rule in the kingdom of Jordan that if you try to use your American passport to

cross into Jordan, that passport had better not have more than one or two Israeli consular stamps.

I had long felt that this rule was harmful to the rights of any American citizen. And so I was determined to check it out.

Boy, I got told.

Was it a crime that one Herb Brin, an American journalist became embroiled diplomatically while trying to achieve a brave new dimension in international travel, one that would allow him, me, to visit Amman, Jordan, with my friend Chet Opal who was now the American consul general in Amman?

If they'd let me in, wouldn't the world be a more beautiful one?

Those were the halcyon days when all the world knew that Israel had achieved a spectacular feat when it captured a guy named Adolph Eichmann in Argentina and flew him to Jerusalem as newspapers proclaimed: The Beast is in Our Hands!

It was a hot, sizzling spring day when I boarded a city bus in Jerusalem heading for Jericho and its well-known Allenby Bridge over the River Jordan.

Indeed, I hadn't planned to go to Saudi Arabia at all. I hoped to pop in to visit with Chester Opal, the American consul general in Amman — the gent who had me fired at City Press because I wasn't tough enough as a journalist.

I figured it would be a piece of diplomatic cake to return to Jericho from a visit with Chet.

What would King Hussein of Jordan want with me? After all.

Jordanian bus authorities had other plans however.

The bus to Mecca rolled on in the afternoon sunshine.

I was told to run after it shouting: "Hey, wait for me!"

The bus dropped me off however, stranded, inside Jordan – some three or four miles within King Hussein's domain. Stranded. But stranded! Under a hot sun.

I was told by a bus attendant that one of the buses returning from Mecca to Jericho might have a standing-room only spot for me. If I held on. Patient.

They were giving me the business. Ha-ha!

Three hours later, I launched my trek back to Jericho. By foot. No taxis in sight on this lonely road.

Hot?

I learned that Chet Opal laughed to read my account of Herb Brin's invasion of Jordan.

Elie Wiesel, the great poet of the Holocaust,,laughed so much that he submitted my piece to a contest for Jewish journalists named for Boris Smolar the veteran editor of the Jewish Daily Forward

in New York.

It won the first Smolar Award of the Council of Jewish Federations ... considered the “Pulitzer Prize” in Jewish journalism.

O.K., I didn’t make it that time to visit with Chet Opal in Amman. But I did return to Jordan, first class, some 10 or 15 years later as formal peace was established between Israel and Jordan.

Artist David Rose and I managed to be on the second bus that officially left the Israeli port city of Eilat for Amman. Along the way we visited the great city of Petra that was carved by an early civilization into the red rocks overlooking the Jordan Valley.

David and I rode into the beautiful capital city of Amman, Jordan, in style.

And there was none of this nonsense to fake it by way of a “pilgrimage” to Mecca.

I felt that by now I was too old for that sort of child’s play.

But, alas, Chet Opal had left his diplomatic post in Jordan. I never did get to see him as the Chicago journalist who went straight.

He’d laugh at this story. Probably would mumble: “Herb, you’re still too soft as a reporter for City Press.”

Oh, well.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: _____

For my way of thinking, “Hank” is a very doggone masculine sounding name.

Hank is supposedly a derivative of the name Henry.

(When I was born “Henry” was the name given to me on my birth certificate. But everybody and his mother called me “Hymie”. And later, Herb. NOT Herbert!)

Two of my best friends were named Hank.

Hank Watchman was the toughest fighter for Israeli causes on the American scene. Collected more than a dozen shrapnel wounds in the fighting on Saipan in the South Pacific.

Hank Greenspun, of Las Vegas, was the other one. He was an aide to Gen. Eisenhower in Europe. (He found time to court his beautiful Barbara in Ireland. But that’s a story for Barbara to tell.)

Talk to either Hank and you’d have met the gentlest of folks on earth. One did not, repeat — did not! — cross them on a matter of honor or the decent treatment of the memories of those who were haunted by Hitler and his German murder gangs.

Anyway, got a call from Hank Watchman some time in the late 1950s.

“Herb, Bobby Briscoe’s coming to San Diego and called to say he wants to meet you.”

“The Bobby Briscoe?”

“Yeah, Bobby Briscoe, mayor of Dublin,” Watchman added.

Now, that’s making it big time.

O.K., the three of us met in the El Cortez, that sexy San Diego hotel that invented outside elevators.

Briscoe had somehow learned of my journalistic exploits in reports published by the London Jewish Chronicle.

Guess I was making it big time. In Europe.

But I was more interested in Bobby Briscoe.

How did a nice Jewish boy in Ireland make it to become lord mayor of Dublin, no less?

Bobby minced no words. “I ran guns for the IRA.” Translated: He was perhaps the prime gun runner for the Irish Republican Army.

How did Hank Watchman fit into the picture? Bobby Briscoe was Hank’s cousin. An incredible family, the Watchmans.

Then there was all the world but only Hank Greenspun, publisher of the Las Vegas Sun. The greatest gun runner of them all. Shimon Peres, as prime minister of Israel reborn, told me of the enormous debt the Jewish people owed to Hank and the American veterans who gathered around Hank Greenspun.

That’s how I met Hank.

In 1948, Jewish veterans of the fighting in the South Pacific and Europe went out on a hunt for weapons. The group I was with was headed by Sid Levine, father of Mel Levine, who was later to become a congressman representing portions of Los Angeles. Heading the national effort were Shimon Peres and Teddy Kollect, who was to become the legendary mayor of Jerusalem.

Barrels of weapons were collected for shipment to Israel. But a huge stack of machine guns and airplane motors assembled at Wilmington Harbor required special treatment for delivery to the embattled Jews of Palestine, the fragment of Holocaust survivors who fought to keep the new Jewish state alive.

The questions was — would the machine guns arrived in time to help the Jews to fight off seven Arab armies coming in on them from all side?

Jews of California leased a large yacht, the Idelia, which was loaded down to its portholes with surplus equipment.

Hank Greenspun and an assistant made their beds atop the machinery. Hank and his helper

were off to Acapulco, Mexico.

Owner of the Idelia came by to cancel leasing of his yacht. I'm told it was an ugly scene, but the Idelia shoved off.

The seas became rough, and somewhere west of San Diego, the Idelia's motor stopped. Needed recranking.

Look, Hank wasn't the greatest navigator.

But how to start it up again?

Hank pulled the starter motor out to examine it. Seemed to work all right. Holding the starter motor in his bare hands, he thrust the motor into its place with his bare hands. The yacht's engine somehow kicked in. The Idelia was off and again running.

The word had gone forward at Acapulco Harbor that the Mexican army was awaiting this shipment of military equipment. A number of Mexican trucks were waiting for the shipment, to be delivered to a Mexican contingent at Vera Cruz on Mexico's east coast.

Hank made it to Vera Cruz.

While the shipment was being loaded aboard an awaiting freighter, it was being picketed by Jews of Mexico who were told the machinery was being shipped to Arab forces.

When the freighter's captain refused to leave the Mexican harbor, Hank pulled out a revolver and the captain somehow understood the necessity to take his vessel out into international waters.

Arab groups in Mexico learned too late that the military equipment was actually intended for the Jews of Palestine. They began picketing the ship even as the Jewish pickets disappeared.

Hank came back to Las Vegas to face felony charges for violation of the Neutrality Act.

He took on to himself all charges that were intended for all others involved in the escapade.

I came into the picture tenderly.

Having been appointed national deputy director of Jewish War Veterans of the United States, I wrote to President John Kennedy requesting a pardon for Hank Greenspun.

The pardon was granted.

Shimon Peres, as prime minister of the state of Israel, said the arms shipment brought in by Hank Greenspun came at a most critical time in Jewish history.

"Hank Greenspun is a hero of the Jewish people," Peres told me.

There were a number of Hank's friends who were hoping for Frank Sinatra to take on the voyage of the Idelia as a film topic. Someone still can do it. It was a voyage of sheer bravery.

No better friends came out of historic events than Hank Greenspun and Herb Brin.

Hank insisted that Heritage needed its own newspaper press. Found one in Wallingford,

Conn. Suggested that I go out and look at it. The press turned out to have a remarkable history. It had been used to print the Yale Review.

Like it? Buy it, ordered Hank Greenspun.

I paid him back to the last shining nickel.

Of course, that press kept Heritage alive for a long, long time.

#

When Hank passed on, his wife, Barbara, herself of a fine Irish Jewish family, insisted that I ride at her side as Hank was taken to the Jewish cemetery in Las Vegas and laid to rest.

There must be something special about the Jews of Ireland.

But then, there must be something special about the Jews. Especially about those named Hank.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: _____

In the spring of 1961 got a call from Nick Williams, managing editor of the Los Angeles Times. He'd read in Heritage of my plans to go to Israel to cover the impending Eichmann Trial. Would I also consider covering the trial for the Times?

Frank Haven, foreign news editor of the Times, asked me to come in and discuss coverage of the trial and anything else that might come along while I was there. Thus, while I was accredited by the Israelis to cover the trial for Heritage, there was dual accreditation for the Times.

For some two and a half months I sent daily reports to the Times. In turn, Times copy editors helped Heritage to stay afloat on the Los Angeles scene by actually editing the paper.

That operation was in effect the creation of the Times Middle East Bureau.

In Jerusalem. I was placed in a small pension hotel where the entire defense staff of Eichmann was assigned. At the trial, I found myself seated only 10 feet away from the defendant. Once, only once, did Eichmann try to stare me down. When he did, his face turned red. He looked away.

Attending the trial were people like Elie Wiesel, Hank Greenspun. E. Z. Dimitman (Philadelphia Inquirer) and correspondents for all the great newspapers and radio networks.

It was in Jerusalem that I learned from the publisher of my first book of poetry — Wild Flowers — that the book was to be printed. It became a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award.

I never did win that award, but it kept me working away at my poetry.

After sitting through an exhaustive trial session, I'd make it back to my room at the pension to grind out reams of copy on the Corona typewriter I had brought along from L.A. For other journalists, the trial perhaps marked the end of mechanical typing as I knew it. Modems and computer equipment were already gleams in the eyes of laboratory folks like Bill Gates.

I remember a motto used by the Chicago Tribune: "Hew to the line. Let the chips fall where they may!"

Well, I hewed the line: breakfasts and dinners with the staff of Dr. Robert Servatius, Eichmann's defense lawyer.

Once when his secretary and I were strolling aimlessly in the gardens of the pension, she called me over to say that after hearing some of the testimony at the trial, she would never again trust the words of the older folks in Germany. And she began to sob bitterly.

That was the day that witnesses testified that Eichmann had told them not to approach his desk while pleading for the lives of French children.

The air he breathes must not be contaminated with Jewish breath.

I asked Servatius if Eichmann would answer but one question from me.

"What is the question?"

"The question is: 'Why?' "

At dinner, Servatius called me over to say that Eichmann, in answer, insisted that he was merely a cog in Hitler's machine.

"For that he collected millions of Jews from all over the continent for delivery to the death camps?"

"That was his answer to your question..."

It was his only comment to a journalist.

#

Adolph Eichmann was given every opportunity to defend himself by a modern legal system.

It was a Jewish legal system. The Star of David was everywhere in evidence during his trial.

Not one of his victims had been given the opportunity for a human defense.

On his conviction he could plead for mercy to a Jewish judge. To a Jewish president.

He was hanged under an Israeli law that permits execution only for crimes against humanity.

His ashes were scattered far out to sea,

#

As the trial ended, Foreign Minister Abba Eban dedicated the huge, awesome Yad Vashem structure built of rock and concrete which memorialized ashes of the victims of the Holocaust.

Yad Vashem, built atop Jerusalem's holy Mountain of Remembrance, is where all dignitaries of the world who come to Israel to pay their respects to victims of the Holocaust find it necessary to visit.

After the heat of that long trial, I traveled to Switzerland to thaw out. In my book, Ich bin ein Jude, I recount the difficulties I faced in covering Eichmann's proceeding. It is a travel story, describing my journeys over the same rails that Eichmann used to transport Jews from all over Europe to Auschwitz for their destruction.

Ich bin ein Jude

I Am A Jew.

UNTER DEN LINDEN

*I saw a changing of the guard
Unter den Linden
Tall men, Nordic men
Bearing guns, presenting arms
About face, stiff, deliberate
Automatons, raising legs
Goose-step Unter den Linden
Again.*

*It seems I saw a multitude
Unter den Linden
The master race, men, women
Screaming, chanting, euphoric
That tomorrow will be their's
And the tomorrows of tomorrow.*

*The Yellow Star upon the breast
It seemed it was again
Unter den Linden
Beside die Komische Oper
And Mack the Knife
Cavorting for Jenny
And the black freighter going out to sea
And aboard her was me
In an idiot's delight.*

*I saw Anne Frank Unter den Linden
In a museum for German history
And I alone to contemplate the bronze
For who is there to care
Unter den Linden
Where legs goose-step their terror
Through my heart
Beneath the Yellow Stars?*

*Humboldt University sits astride
Unter den Linden
The same von Humboldt of my childhood park
Chicago
Where I dreamed idyllic dreams
And attended Talmud Torah
Beside von Humboldt School
Where Jewish childhood danced.
But never mind.
They offer restitution
To make it good again
Marks, for breathless gas
And ovens bearing symbols of Mercedes
Babies rising to the skies on vaped wings.*

*Restitution?
Give me back my children
From that black freighter
But speak softly now
To me, Unter den Linden.*

CHAPTER NINETEEN: _____

A journalist who finds himself on the firing line of freedom rarely has a personal chance of altering human events. Generally he reports on the news and readers react with a subliminal “gee whiz.” If at all. It was a far different ballgame in December of 1960 when I reported on Jewish events from Moscow.

I had long prided myself on the warmth of my relationship with the Jewish Labor Committee, of which Adolph Held was chairman.

Held worked out of New York. Harry and Lucy Lang, key leaders of the Jewish Labor Committee, worked on the West Coast.

Lucy, a girlhood chum of Paula Ben-Gurion, had been an inspiring leader of the American labor movement. Samuel Gompers, founder of the American Federation of Labor, was proud of his highly vocal and amazingly activist secretary, Lucy Lang.

Lucy’s husband, Harry Lang, was Sunday editor of the Jewish Daily Forward (known to Yiddishists as The Forverts). Both Harry and Lucy were especially dear friends of mine and of the late Harry Golden. Remember Harry Golden’s monthly Carolina Israelite newspaper and the sensational book that came out of it — Only in America?

Harry Golden would write a weekly column for Heritage and I would write occasional pieces for his Israelite.

Harry flew out to California one day to insist that I take over the Israelite.

“You are the only one in America who understands the paper and can write its copy,” he insisted.

“But how am I going to keep Heritage afloat, also?” I asked. “Time is doing a killer job on both of us.”

It wasn’t long that Harry Lang organized a gala luncheon at Andre’s Restaurant in Beverly Hills.

“I’m having 15 editors coming out from New York, plus Isaac Bashevis singer. I want them to meet you. They want you to become English editor of the Forverts.”

I was impressed.

The English edition would be weekly.

That’s the nicest tribute to a Jewish guy in journalism that I can imagine.

“Now, Harry — How the hell could I do it?”

“You tell them,” Harry countered. “they’ll be out here on Sunday.”

Bashevis Singer, the Nobel Prize winner, came out a couple of days early. I tried to explain to him that there is a limit to a man's capacity to edit a Jewish journal in English and then to take on a similar task for the Jewish Daily Forward in New York. I'd go dizzy flying back and forth.

It was a great luncheon at Andre's. They got the point.

I was honored beyond anything that came to me in life. But this was not possible.

But I did accept an assignment from Adolph Held, chairman of the Jewish Labor committee, an offshoot of the Workmen's Circle, a creation of the Jewish Daily Forward.

I got a call from Harry Lang to meet with Held at the Beverly Hilton. Lang made it clear that the meeting was of critical importance.

Indeed it was. Perhaps one of the most important in modern Jewish history.

Held said: "There seems to be great trouble for Jews living in the Soviet Union. They appear trapped and can't get out. We must find somebody reliable to check this story out. Somebody who can get a visas from the Soviets."

"Would you try for a visa?" Held asked.

No Eastern Jewish journalist seemed acceptable to the Soviet government. But maybe one from California?

A visa came through for me only days before travel hopes would have fallen apart. I didn't believe it. The visa allowed for a two-week visit to the Moscow area — as a tourist.

Not much time for serious coverage of an important story.

Oh, they knew in the Kremlin that Herb Brin was a Jewish journalist. Would Herb Brin be able to cause them problems during the regime of Nikita Khrushchev? All he writes for is a small Jewish newspaper based near Hollywood. Where could there be any harm?

For two weeks in Moscow, to avoid touring the region with an Intourist guide, I arranged for a series of colds and chills and much-needed medical attention.

I took advantage of my malingering by visiting Moscow's chief rabbi, a man named Levin, and attending services at the Moscow synagogue.

Worshippers had been alerted that I had arrived and from all directions they came to me at the synagogue, thrusting pieces of paper into my coat pockets. There were some 18 to 20 invitations to visit them in their homes.

If I could get there.

Taxis made it a simple task. Everywhere, when I asked in fragment Yiddish or in English,

“What happened to Jewish life here in Moscow?” in almost one voice they responded: “Shrei gevaldt!”

The Soviets had been doing a job on the Jews of the Soviet Union — never mind that many wore the highest of Soviet medals won in the fierce battles against the nazis.

I assured the Jewish families that I would scream from the rooftops. I haven’t stopped hollering after all these years.

Saturday morning I walked over to the Israeli Embassy, hoping to hear the views of Ambassador Golda Meir. I had known Golda from her Chicago and Milwaukee days. Golda would be away for the week, I was told.

Her deputy said to me: “Let’s take a walk.” His eyes scanned the walls. A warning that the walls had ears.

We walked in the nearby park for a considerable distance before the Israeli diplomat would say a word.

“Now, we talk...”

Word had come to him that a journalist from California would be out as a visitor.

I asked: What shall I make of reports I’m receiving from the Jewish families I am visiting?

The Soviet are clamping down on the Jews.

Jewish students are being hampered in the colleges.

Jewish military heroes are being roused.

Jobs are being denied to the Jews . . . all this after Hitler.

I am being asked to shrei gevaldt when I leave the Soviet Union.

Even Aaron Vergelis, the so-called “commissar for the Jews,” was a badly frightened man when I met with him briefly during my sojourn in Moscow.

Was a terrifying new truth emerging for our people?

“When you leave, remember everything,” the diplomat said. “Shrei gevaldt!”

That night I flew out to Rome, landing there at around 3 a.m. to await a night flight via El Al to New York.

Suddenly, I heard a loud speaker announcement for “Mr. Brin, go to a white telephone,” in the huge airport lobby.

“You are being asked to return to Israel on a waiting El Al plane,” I was told.

Before going to Moscow, I’d visited Israel. Was picked up in Warsaw for my flight to Moscow by Soviet jet — a flight singular enough, distinguished by attendants who served black bread and black beer. A mean combination.

#

The El Al plane back to Israel was all but empty of passengers. Landed at about 4 a.m. and was told we were headed for Jerusalem.

Short of 5 a.m., in the dark, I was led to a maze of government offices — then into the private office of the prime minister, David Ben-Gurion.

Awaiting my arrival also was Tom Tugend, my senior associate editor. Tom was toying with a cheapie camera.

Ben-Gurion turned over a corner of his desk to me so I could fill him in on my experiences in Moscow. I spoke slowly in English to a prime minister who took lengthy notes in Hebrew. Tugend shot several photos of the historic scene. Fortunately, one of the photographs came out well enough to be of use to a newspaper.

At one point in my presentation, B-G looked me in the eye and said that what I was reporting to him would be one of the most important projects that Jewish people would have to perform — the saving of Jews out of the Soviet Union.

The notes made by the prime minister were collected and are included in the archives of Ben-Gurion's historic documents.

Ben-Gurion was right. My visit to Moscow had been credited with launching the campaign to free Jews from entrapment by the Soviet Union.

#

Often I wonder whether there was a higher plan for my beautiful mother to flee the pogrom that struck her family in Pietrikov along the Dnieper River — and caused her to flee to the Statue of Liberty, to Castle Garden, and then to Chicago to await my father who would flee from the degrading army of the Czar.

CHAPTER TWENTY: _____

For much of the 1980s I was teamed up with David Rose, one of America's leading courtroom artists.

We covered Jewish National Fund projects in Israel during the early 1980s and then were accorded the first press credentials of the French government to cover the Klaus Barbie trial when the "Butcher of Lyon" was found guilty of killing Jewish children.

I was shocked to learn that Barbie had later been hired by the U.S. government as a spy against the Soviet Union and France. Paid in cigarettes and candy bars.

Rose and I spent several months in Germany where I obtained material for a book, *Where are the Children?* Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel joined in offering a section, "Reflections in Epilogue," for that book.

Hymie Brin had come a long way from the City Press days when a rewrite man insisted that he was "too soft" to be a successful journalist.

Brin and Rose were asked by Israel's Zim Container Ship Lines to cover highlights of Jewish commerce in the Pacific. We spent months aboard Zim container ships, visiting ports of call in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

We came back to Heritage to cover the trial in Denver of a dozen members of the Aryan Nations. They were charged with killing Denver's radio talk show host, Alan Burg. Pumped 13 bullets into him, in cold blood. That was followed by our coverage of federal charges directed against the entire Aryan Nations and leaders in California of the Ku Klux Klan.

This was at a trial held in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Federal charges were dismissed.

It was inevitable that David Rose and I would need a vacation from each other.

I took mine by way of a visit to Lake Louise in Canada's glaciers country where I launched a new circle of nature poems. Example:

I Hear the Bluebird Cry

In the dull morning of the mountains

The swift highway to Banff

Is silent beneath the tires

Of my LeBaron.

Of a sudden the sun explodes

And the summer rain

Paints enchantments

Of the essential colors

And shamelessly I sing a childhood song

Alone in my LeBaron

As a rainbow sharpens an eyebrow arch

Above a traffic-yellowed ice cap

Where the sky is blue

Ice blue.

Enthralled, I search for bluebirds

Which always fly, do they not

Higher even than the ice fields of Banff.

But I really find no bluebirds

Nor pots of gold

In this rainbow reverie

Seeking sources of my bedazzlement.

*Somewhere over the rainbow
And the colors follow me
Along an undulating river of highway
Amidst these glaciers of Alberta*

*Where I embrace the mysteries
Of long forgotten melodies.*

*A scraggly mountain squirrel
Leaps out across the roadway
Then is halted by indecision
As I screech the brakes of my LeBaron
To spare the tiny animal
Which then flies against the wheel
Of an oncoming car
Selecting another to be the killer.*

*Life, as it must, ebbs
For frightened animal
Now making circles in the roadway dust,*

*Its body hurtled into concentrics
By the impact
As traffic races on.*

*Across the icefields is still the rainbow
Arching above the glaciers
Of forever.
But now I hear no childhood singing
Over this rainbow
Nor does the bluebird fly, this day
Over the mountains to Banff.*

*Yet it seems, in softest tone
I hear the bluebird cry.*

August 31, 1989

Coeur D'Alene, Idaho

For my return to California, I noted that the route would take me through Coeur D'Alene, not very far from the Hayden Lake compound of the Aryan Nations Ku Klux Klan gang.

I telephoned Dan Brin, our Heritage senior editor and my right arm:

"What do you think about my trying to make it inside the Aryan Nations compound? Ever hear of a Jewish reporter doing a piece about a visit to a Kluxer killer compound?"

"Sensational idea," Dan said, excited but concerned about his old man. "But dangerous as hell!"

Drove to Couer D'Alene and made it to the sheriff's office. I wanted his staff to be aware that I was on my way to Hayden Lake and that if I didn't call him within four or five hours, please to look for me in the compound.

And so I drove somewhat bravely, if not fool-

hardily into a private dirt road leading to the training grounds of one of the most savage anti-

Semitic operations in America.

Only to be met by eight or nine savage, snarling dogs.

I let the dogs snarl and bark for a considerable time. Then I got out of the car and headed angrily for the most savage of the dogs, waving my arms and snarling back at him. The dog, a German Shepherd, turned away and fled into a nearby wooded area. The other dogs followed.

I sauntered over to the compound's small office building. I asked a woman in the office for Richard Butler, founder of the Aryan Nations.

"You're out of luck," she said. "He's away at court.

I handed her my card with its Ten Commandments logo above which was proclaimed: Heritage, Southwest Jewish Press.

I explained that I'd met Mr. Butler at the Fort Smith trial and that he suggested for me to come and visit the Hayden Lake compound.

Which was true enough.

Figuring that I didn't have the guts to show up.

The woman proved to be Butler's office manager. She agreed to show me around.

She went into another room to make a telephone call. Left me with a bookcase full of KKK literature. Mostly how to organize a Ku Klux Klan kaboodle.

The Klan literature and an Aryan Nations coffee mug caught my eye. Wouldn't the West Coast director of the Anti-Defamation League love to have a coffee mug souvenir from the Aryan Nations compound?

"You want it? You can have it," the woman said, returning from her somewhat excited phone call. "Come, I'll show you around."

Took me next door to a rather large wooden church building marked with hanging swastikas.

We had a church service here this morning," she said.

Inside the church were huge nazi banners, three or four photos of Hitler and an occasional cross.

Beside the church building was the compound's KKK parade ground, littered with charred wooden crosses.

"This is where you burn the crosses," I observed .

"We never burn crosses," she corrected me. "We light crosses."

"There was a cross lighting ceremony here last night," the woman observed.

Ten or twelve Kluxers took part in the ceremony she said. It was conducted by Rev. Butler.

She agreed to photograph me amidst the burned crosses — using my own camera.

She appeared nervous as she showed me around, apparently unsure that she was doing the right thing. There were a number of youthful male voices coming out of shacks where visiting Kluxers were put up for the night. Nobody came out to assist Butler's office manager in the decisions she was making.

These were the grounds where an aide to Butler, Robert Matthews, had organized the group of killers called The Order. This subgang would ride herd on the Pacific Coast Highway, seeking targets for highway robberies that netted them in excess of \$4 million.

When the FBI got too hot on their trail, Matthews would lead his gang to Whidby Island, off the coast of Seattle. It was on Whidbey Island that the FBI caught up with the gang. In a violent shootout, Matthews was shot to death.

It was to Hayden Lake that Butler moved the notorious Wesley (Shifty Legs) Swift's Church of Jesus Christ raising the proposition that the northwest states ought to become the homeland for the "True Israelite" nation because it was to this country that the true Lost Tribes of Israel had come to fulfill all the visions of prophecy given to the Jewish people, who are now irrelevant.

As I left for my car, the pack of snarling dogs snarled away, but at a distance.

P.S. I walked out of the Aryan Nations compound at Hayden Lake with a beautiful, somewhat, coffee mug and an armload of literature on how to start a Ku Klux klavern.

I donated these items to David Lehrer, Pacific Region director for the Anti-Defamation League.

"You walked in on the Aryan Nations?," David observed. "I don't believe it."

He sipped slowly on his very own coffee mug.

"Sonuvagun!" he said.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: __

Dear readers — If you're still around, you'll perhaps want to know that this is being written on a Hermes 3000, a manual typewriter sitting on my desk beside an iMac computer with all kinds of gadgets etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

I can't seem to find a typewriter mechanic who can fix the tape-advancing dealeeoh on my beloved Hermes. And so I've got to fiddle around with its wheeleeoh every couple of lines.

O.K., don't ask me why I'm not using my spanking new blue iMac. But I'll tell you. Would you believe — my son Dan installed the iMac for me some 8 months ago, and I'll be smitten, I still don't know what an Internet is. Dan teaches me in one ear and suddenly ideas for a chapter bounce

out of the other and plaintively I reach for my Hermes.

This whole friggin' book's been banged out on the Hermes.

Come on, you Silicon Valley bums. Have a heart ... flying mice on TV screens — click, click.

I'll be 87 in February, two months hence. He gets me an iMac!

O.K., back to the story. I'm tempted to call it: "If your mother says he loves you — CHECK IT OUT!" Damned good title. Am checking it out.

If Dan will let me. Ah ... youngsters are kings these days!

NOW.

NOW back to the story...

It's still Chapter 21, remember?

#

I missed being in Israel to cover the War of Independence for the Jewish state. But I did manage to be there for most of the others wars, including the savage War of Attrition that followed the Six Day War of 1967.

The War of Attrition actually was a showdown air war between Israeli and Soviet pilots. There were numerous Soviet planes that were shot down over the Negev Desert. I wondered, were the Israelis heading to a war with the Soviets?

Both Egypt and Syria were in huge propaganda campaigns against the Israelis and there was a question mark: How would the tiny state of Israel be able to survive another combined effort by Syria, Egypt and Jordan?

When the 1967 showdown came, I was with a group of American publishers of Jewish newspapers on a tour of Israel.

The tour ended as President Nasser, of Egypt, began moving his armies into the Sinai Desert. At the same time, Nasser informed the Israelis that the Straits of Tiran would henceforth be closed to Israeli shipping out of the Port of Eilat.

Ominous, but hardly a shooting war.

Our tour was leaving for Rome on June 6 and the Israelis insisted that all members of the tour leave together. Which meant Herb Brin, also.

I loaded my taxi outside the Tel Aviv Hilton and we were about to move out when a young (40-ish) man came up and asked to be given my cab. Had a flight to catch out to Rome.

"Come on in," I said. "We're headed for the airport also. For Rome. You're welcome to climb aboard."

He had a rather large suitcase, which the driver fastened to the roof of the taxi, and we were

off.

As we pulled away from the Hilton, I offered my name: "Herb Brin."

He took my hand and said, "Winston Churchill."

Said he was headed back to England where he was a member of Parliament. "There won't be a war," he said. "If war breaks out, I'll be on the next plane back to Israel."

If war breaks out, will Herb Brin be able to get back as easily as the grandson of Britain's wartime prime minister?

While we were in the air, war broke out.

I saw Winston Churchill leave the plane, racing for an El Al counter to get him back to Israel. He made it. He made it.

It took me 18 hours to get back to Israel.

#

But I got there.

The Israeli pilots devastated the Egyptians. I headed for the Syrian front, and from the shores of Lake Tiberias one could look up into the barrels of Syrian tanks. This was now a struggle for the Golan Heights.

An Israeli truck took me up to a hillside fortress on the slopes of Mount Hermon. This was a point only 14 miles or so from Damascus.

Firing away by mortar were Israelis, many still in civilian garb. "The war came on too fast for our unit," one of the mortar men explained. The Syrians needed no explanation.

Higher up, near the crest of Mount Hermon, Capt. Motti Yonay was killed. Motti was the brother of Ehud Yonay, one of our Heritage editors. Motti had visited my home in Malibu. I didn't learn of his loss until later. Later. Broke my heart.

#

There is no heroism in being assigned to cover the theaters of war as they come along.

In the Middle East conflict, the theaters of war seem always to be there. Waiting.

By time I got back from the Mount Hermon outpost confronting Damascus, the Western Wall was back in Israeli hands. Hopefully forever. I joined a group of Israelis that stormed their way to Mount Scopus, with its once-great educational and medical facilities.

I shudder when I think of explosions that shattered the walls and ceilings of the Hadassah Hospital. The nearby Hebrew university was also hardly spared the many years of occupation by Jordanian forces. Must admit, though, that I was thrilled to see the view of the Dead Sea from the crest of Mount Scopus.

But the now-free Western Wall was a magnet for me. Wrote my heart out on these stories.

#

I covered only the aftermath of 1973's Yom Kippur War — which came with unpredictable suddenness. This was prelude to Egyptian Prime Minister Anwar Sadat's greatest moment, later, as he and Menachem Begin clasped hands at Camp David and created a dream of infinite possibilities for peace between Egypt and Israel.

A dream that ended all too soon for Anwar Sadat.

To Begin's credit, Israel kept all her promises made to Sadat, including the dismantling of an Israeli city in the Sinai Desert which I felt ought to have been maintained as an outpost of democracy.

Then came Operation Peace for the Galilee in 1982.

It was Israel's tremendous victory in the 1973 War which enabled me to join with an American Broadcasting unit that was crossing the Suez Canal heading for Suez City at first and then to Kilometer 101 in the Egyptian Desert. Here Egyptian forces surrendered en masse to Israel's Gen. Ariel (Arik) Sharon.

The 1973 War was a classic in military daring.

At one point I was with an advanced Israeli unit that allowed large containers of water to be ferried across the canal and thus save the lives of thousands of Egyptians stranded on the Israeli side.

I still have my press card that was issued in Switzerland, which I carry to commemorate the conclusion of the war between Egypt and Israel.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: _____

This section must be included in any writing that I do in relation to my own understanding of events that transpired in Europe — in Germany! — during the terrible years in which I was a reporter at large, preparing my book Where Are The Children?

It came out during an interview with Dr. Klaus Kinkel, Germany's foreign minister. I asked him for an explanation of Germany's Hitlerian madness.

"I still cannot, as you cannot, understand how it was possible that intelligent people, intellectuals, university people, judges, church people, all failed to stop the coming up of the nazis," he said.

I promptly took the occasion to suggest the following:

"A million and a half children were murdered by the state. The judicial system of Germany did not protect one child at a public trial. We have the names of nobody who went through the gas

chambers. Nobody was put on trial by the German government. A million and a half children were manufactured to death by government. They went nameless and ageless to their deaths. Not one child was asked whether he pleads guilt or not guilty. Where was the great judicial system of Germany?"

Dr. Kinkel, who was then the state secretary to the Ministry of Justice of the Federal Republic, said sorrowfully: "I understand you. I understand you..."

Dr. Kinkel said the sending of children and their mothers to the gas chambers, "was all done in secrecy"... not known to the population at large.

"It was all done secretly and the people didn't know about it."

"Dr. Kinkel, may I suggest that thousands of SS soldiers, officers and leaders of the nazi regime didn't exactly disappear from the face of the Earth. Members of the SS are still here in Germany. I mean, the people who controlled the camps. Is it really possible that it was all a massive secret, that nobody knew?"

"In saying that people didn't know, I don't want to relieve anyone of the responsibility concerning these terrible acts. Of course there are people who knew, responsible people. And they also knew why they put the camps in Poland and not in Germany. But the majority of the people did not know.

"This does not mean that they would have tried to prevent matters from happening. They probably would still have remained silent and probably would have said, 'We can't do anything about it'."

#

Dr. Bruno Heck, secretary general of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, was asked: "What happened to a million and a half Jewish children? Why were they slaughtered?"

Heck explained . . .

"In March 1941, Hitler gave a secret speech to his officers and generals explaining why the Germans must invade Russia. Then he talked about the enemy number one, the Communists and the Jews. He said we must destroy them in our historical mission and not only in the first generation but even in the second generation. Because if you don't kill the second generation you will have people of revenge. They will find you. This is a terrible understanding of let's get rid of the Jewish children."

Brin: Through it all, the educated community of Germany went along with the killings.

Heck: Yes, it is what I call the historical guilt of a higher educated generation of Germans, and we must somehow repay what I say is a historical mortgage owed to the Jewish people.

Brin: I sat quietly for the longest moment of my life. I wanted no part of that mortgage.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: ____

For more than 35 years I dogged a guy named Andrija Artukovic. He wanted to live freely in America. I wanted to have him sent back to Croatia branded a killer. Which he was.

He was sent back.

A complicated, complicated story. But heartbreaking.

Andrija Artukovic was brought out of Europe by the Catholic Church. He was dressed as a priest in Ireland where he and his family were picked up and somehow secreted to America. To a luxurious home in Seal Beach, California, prepared for them by Artukovic's brother a prominent paving contractor.

Each year, U.S. immigration authorities would hold a hearing in Federal Court, seeking to order the return to Zagreb, of Artukovic who was charged with being wartime Croatia's interior minister and Hitler disciple.

Artukovic was founder of the notorious Ustasha murder gang, credited with playing the key role in the slaughter of some 700,000 Serbs and an estimated 65,000 Jews and Gypsies.

After one immigration hearing at the federal building in Los Angeles, a gang of Ustasha thugs surrounded me. One snarled that he would personally nail down the cover to my casket.

Suddenly, a well-dressed young man pushed to the center of the courthouse melee and ordered the gang to back away.

"This is not what we do in America," he said sternly. The Croatian gang pulled back.

The young man offered me his hand. "My name is Radislav Artukovic. I've been reading what you've been writing about my father..."

"Nothing I write about your father may be visited upon you," I said.

I congratulated Rad Artukovic for his courage in standing up to a home grown Californian gang of Ustasha members. Rad later visited me at our Heritage office. A deeply troubled young man.

It wasn't long after that that his father was deported back to Croatia, where, in his 80s, he was placed on trial in Zagreb charged with countless heinous crimes against humanity.

There, in prison, Artukovic died.

Immigration officials credited Heritage with playing the key role in bringing Andrija Artukovic to justice.

#

The Serbian community of California noted our efforts to have Artukovic returned to Zagreb for trial.

A delegation of California Serbs came to my office near the University of Southern California.

I was invited as guest of the Serbian Orthodox Church to visit Serbia and meet with the church patriarch, who had learned of my role in having Artukovic returned to Croatia in the cause of justice.

A war between the Croats and Serbs was steaming up. It was 1993. Croatia was still using Ustasha methods in confronting Serbs.

I agreed to accept the invitation on condition the delegation receives approval, also, from two of my sons, Dr. David Brin, an astrophysicist, and Dan Brin, Heritage editor. They agreed, provided that the Serbian Orthodox Church would provide me with a full-time attendant and keep me out of the way of bullets. (Mind you, I was 78 and heading for a war zone. Still, it seemed overprotective of an old news hound!)

I was already beginning to rely on a cane to get around.

#

I flew from New York to Budapest, then by bus to Belgrade. There I was met by a representative of the patriarch of the Serbian church and by a Jewish woman who said she represented the Jewish community of Serbia. Actually, she represented the government of Slobodan Milosevic. She was surrounded by a bodyguard of soldiers wherever she went.

The church had sent along a tall, English-speaking young priest with a beautiful sense of humor. And he loved American poetry. Indeed, he quoted lines from my own poems, which he said were very good indeed.

Darn tootin', I said, agreeing with him that he was an excellent judge of poetic genius.

He took me to dinner with the Patriarch. I assured the Patriarch that the young man would go far in the Serbian church.

The woman guide said she would work with the young man of the Serbian church and thus avoid an embarrassing conflict over my availability. She asked whether I could attend Sabbath services with her and I said I would be proud to accept.

With this as backdrop, I toured all of Serbia and Kosovo, meeting with church elders and suggesting that Serbia faced a dangerous situation by remaining in Kosovo without a huge influx of Serbs into the area.

The Serb population of Kosovo had become a minority. and the immigrant Albanians who now dominated its population were being handed a historic section of ancient Serbia.

My Jewish guide told me that Serbia was occupied with seeking to hold off a large Croatian army in the Bosnian-Herzgovian sector of former Yugoslavia and that Serbs were lacking in manpower.

“The handwriting is on the wall,” I told her.

A Serbian contingent took me to what they described as a quiet section of the front with Croatia. It was not very quiet when we got there.

A Croatian battle force on the other side of the Sava River began firing away at the Serbia party I was with. We all hit the ground, and when the shooting halted, we managed to flee the district and head for Sarajevo, Bosnia.

On the way there, our party visited Jasenovac, the burial grounds for thousands upon thousands of Ustasha victims.

There were huge burial mounds at Jasenovac and a museum explaining how the Ustasha made short shrift of its victims.

Gypsies were used to slit the throats of victims, using a curved kama knife. A horrendous physical task.

Sarajevo was the Bosnian city where an assassin killed an archduke to launch World War I. It also contains many important Jewish memories — a Jewish cemetery on a hilltop and a facility that contains the original Sarajevo Haggadah, a medieval masterpiece referred to by Jews everywhere on the Passover holiday. A prized sacred relic.

Soon, Sarajevo would be engulfed in the full savagery that happens when men fall for their hatred of others in groups, calling whole families and peoples less than human, deserving of death.

I took a bus from Sarajevo to the Mediterranean coast and wrote some poems, one of which is contained in this volume. Thus ended my coverage of the great wars of Europe during a terrible 20th Century.

Epilogue

What more can a man say?

That question always nags you. What more could I have said, to help make things better.

Better for those I loved across a long life.

Better for a nation that my parents came to and that -- despite hardships -- was unimaginably wonderful to all of us.

Better for a people who have suffered unimaginably cruelty, and have a long journey ahead.

How I wish I could say more! Keep on shouting and writing and crying out for justice.

But here we are. One small human chapter rounding up. As *Heritage* moved on to new owners, taking on new challenges. As my sons and their children face yet another century of wonders and perils.

As *you* turn your faces ahead...

Do it with hope. Face the future with love and courage, and always with an eye for challenging injustice and the evils that men do.

But above all, face it with hope.

Lost Chances

*In Sarajevo
 Where skis slalom
 Their Olympian memories
 And skaters will forever race
 The frozen lakes
 Reliving lost chances
 Between bombs.*

*In Sarajevo
 Where 19 year old Javrilovic Princip
 Pointed pistol at an archduke, crying:
 "For Serbian freedom!"
 And a world enmeshed darkness
 Discovering trenches, poison gas
 And lost chances by the millions.*

*Where German defeat
 Festered a twisted cross
 And a new order
 And new terrors named Ustasha
 New gases, new rockets, new atoms
 And more lost chances
 Than humankind can fathom.*

*We spoke of books and legends
 (Every people must weave its legends)
 And rhythms
 And song:
 The poet must celebrate life
 The other will be soon enough coming.*

*Suddenly it was Dubrovnik
 Her eyes searched mine
 And I, chilled of my winter years,
 Found another lost chance
 Rooted in Sarajevo
 Which I dare not take.
 Nov. 20, 1985 Dubrovnik*

*In Sarajevo
 At the bus stop
 Where we waited for hours
 Freezing in the new winter
 Of Sarajevo
 Her eyes glistened discovery.*

*A student in the faculty of literature
 That I, poet of my winter years,
 Would be at her side
 To Dubrovnik
 The medieval castle city
 On the Adriatic.*

ANd More (possible formatting problems)_

It was the worst of times.

Oh, it was the worst of times!

*Everything else in my life experiences as a reporter is
commentary.*

Terrible commentary!

Moishele

How sad

The German lost his song it's said.

As warfare ended.

Oh Wagner me not Wagner

Beethoven me not Beethoven

Where do they sing the Lorelie

Now

In the folk halls of a people?

Oh where have the Kurt Weill's gone

And the twinkle eyes of a Lotte

Or Marlene and her Blue Angel

Underneath a lamp post

Beside a darkening sea?

How sad

The German lost his song

As warfare ended.

NATHAN'S POEM

His eyes aglow

Nathan held me in his thrall:

Write me a poem, just for me...

You see.

His hand clutched mine

Walking with me to our IHOP

To dine.

I felt his embrace

His tender hand-embrace

While my eyes struggled to clear

Mightily struggled to clear.

Grandson

I write you your poem

For it is now the secular millennium

And you are eight

Nate.

And there is hardly telling

The days I've got To clasp your hand

In embrace of love.

Nate

May your years shine, my child

On your pathways to forever

And may all the children you know

And do not know Celebrate the possibilities

Of being

Always in friendship.

Nate It was not always so

As you'll come to know

For I give you a legacy

Of troubled children on railroad cars

Savage railroad cars.

Take heart my child

In your studies

Seek out the ways to human kindness.

You will find new meaning

To being

Even as you are eight Nate.

Waiting

We wait

At the home for the aging Aging

Waiting our turn.

Surrounded by wrinkled

Distortions of time

Amidst memories

So many, many memories

And dreams forgotten

It's not exactly fear

We fear

Wonderment, perhaps

Of what we await

Accepting the power and the magnitudes of pills

Oh how they mesmerize

*The pills
And to be kept alive beyond our time —
Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.*

*Never thought I'd make it
But then, the octogenarians among us
Are the young ones
Stalking their nineties
Some concerned with the arts
The sciences
While waiting for nickel and dime games
Of bingo in the library.*

*For the irreverent
Irreverence is part of aging
The couthless stories
Remain without couth
As we wait.*

*And we are embraced
By the power and wonderment
Of chemistry
Stored in those magical pills
Of many, many colors
And shapes*

*To be kept alive
To be kept alive.*

While centenarian women

*Cuddle plastic baby dolls
Seeking to revive motherhood
Long, long gone.*

*Lu-li-lu-li lu
She sings
It is the same melody once sung to me
By my beautiful mother
Who fled Russland
For a dream of freedom.*

*And who among us encountered the German
The German, the German, the German
He of the heart of savagery
In our time?*

*The reverent among us are concerned
With being handled kindly
When wrapped in our final prayer shawls*

*And have we outlived our Kaddish?
Who will recite the Kaddish?
The civilized prayer that sings of life
Eternal.*

*Oh, one assumes the final car
Will be black enough*

Elegantly black for all our memories.

*Alone, alone with our televisions
Fears set in amidst wonderments
Of the world we are leaving
As we await improbable tomorrows
Leaving our yesterdays of horses and wagons
For rockets to the stars
And the dot corn society of computers
To think of jet propulsion
And of Mars In an aura of exotic dreams
Or songs of love still desired.*

*At the home for the aging
We wait Aging
Waiting our turn, the call of "Next!"
Embraced by the history
Of the most savage, the most creative
And the most melancholy Of times.*

